Representing the Human Condition: A Comparative Study of the Works of Jorge Luis Borges and Italo Calvino

by

Suradech Chotiudompant

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in Comparative Literature

University of Warwick, Centre for Translation and
Comparative Cultural Studies

November 2003

Table of Contents

List of Illustrations

Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to thank the Anandamahidol Foundation and its Arts Sub-Committee for providing generous financial support for my project.

I am profoundly grateful to my supervisors, Professor Susan Bassnett and Professor Michael Bell, for their vision, patience, and unstinting guidance. I also appreciate conversing, albeit briefly in some cases, with Professor Evelyn Fishburn, Professor Edwin Williamson, Professor John Drakakis, Professor Andrew Hurley, Professor Ana María Barrenechea, Professor Lois Parkinson Zamora, and Dr Daniel Cordle. Thanks are due to Professor John King, Professor Beatriz Sarlo, Professor Cris Nash, Dr John Rignall, Dr John Fletcher, Dr Lynn Guyver, Dr Ruth Cherrington, and Dr Emma Mason, for allowing me to sit in on their classes.

I would like to thank the staff of following libraries, from which I have gathered my material: the University of Warwick Library, the British Library, the Library of the Università per Stranieri di Siena, the Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati (Siena), the Biblioteca Nacional de la Argentina, the Instituto de Literatura Hispanoamericana, and the Humanities Library of the Universidad de Buenos Aires. Martha J. Barbato of the Instituto de Literatura Argentina 'Ricardo Rojas' deserves special thanks.

In addition, my gratitude is due to the Centre for Translation and Comparative Cultural Studies of the University of Warwick and its staff members for allowing me to deliver parts of this thesis on various occasions to its wonderful international audiences, and for funding my trip to present a paper at the University of Aarhus, Denmark. I would also like to thank the Humanities Research Centre for allowing Fiona Mackintosh and me to organise the conference 'Traces of Borges', which gave me an opportunity to meet such distinguished writers and scholars as Luisa Valenzuela, and Professor Michael Wood.

In Thailand, I appreciate enormous moral support and unfailing kindness from my teachers of the Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University, especially Dr M.R. Kalaya Tingsabadh, Ajarn Pawan Mokya, Dr Dhiravat na Pombejra, Dr Trisilpa Boonkhachorn, Dr Anongnat Thakoengwit, Dr Pachee Yuvajita, Dr Ananchanok Pahnichaputt, Ajarn Rongrat Dusadeesurapot, Ajarn Chantana Chaichit, and Ajarn Sankavat Praditpong.

I would like to thank colleagues and friends, especially Dr Ora-ong Chakorn, Varavadi Vongsangah, Diane Johnson, Charlotte Ross, Dr Fiona Mackintosh, Yoshihisa Hashimoto, Peter Playdon, Lawrence Liang, and Sanja Perovic, with whom I enjoyed having conversations.

Thanks also go to the Royal Thai Embassies in Buenos Aires and Rome, which made my life in their respective cities much easier. I am grateful to Salynn Phudtapitug, Eriko Baba, and Franco Biotti, whose friendship and enormous generosity made my stay in Siena even more wonderful. In Buenos Aires, I am indebted to Julio Orione, Hugo Beccacece, Jamie O'Connell, Monica Lara de Chiarella, Paolo Luzuriaga, and Elvira Onetto, with whom I had the honour to meet and have wonderful conversations. In addition, I would like to acknowledge my debts to the staff of the Thai Government Students' Office in London, who facilitated my travel arrangements for research abroad.

I am profoundly grateful to my family in Thailand, especially my parents, Vichai and Arunee Chotiudompant, for their constant support and patience during my long absence. I am especially grateful to Matthew Hunt for his confidence and encouragement, and to

his family for their generous support and constant kindness during my long stay in the UK.

Declaration

I confirm that this thesis is my own work and that it has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

Abstract

The thesis aims to explore the issue of representation and its limits in the works of Jorge Luis Borges and Italo Calvino. It focuses on the authors' treatments of the relationships between representational practices and the constraining limits of the human condition in perceiving reality. The introduction aims to discuss the methodology of the thesis and the theoretical positions of contemporary theorists regarding these relationships in order to contextualise and place the thesis in perspective. The conflictual tension between representation and the human condition will then be organised around five major themes, i.e. language, cognition, hermeneutics, spatial forms, and games, each of which will be a focal point of a chapter. While the first two chapters set out to describe how language and cognition prevent humans from attaining the real in its absolute state, the next three chapters will mainly discuss the implications and consequences of the unattainable real and human inadequacies. Each of these five chapters, in its different yet interconnected direction, features an extensive discussion of the issue of representational limits and a comparative analysis of what the authors manage to do in face of the issue. A final conclusion will summarise the similarities and differences in the ways both authors deal with the critical interactions between representation and the limits of the human condition.

Introduction

Jorge Luis Borges and Italo Calvino are two authors who seem to belong to different worlds and times: while the former flourished and went on to become one of the most important Latin American writers, the latter was a generation younger and enjoyed his reputation as both an editor and a creative writer in European literary circles. The works of both authors have been critically acclaimed worldwide.[1] While this introduction chooses not to sketch out both authors' lives, given the fact that there are already several biographical studies of the two writers published,[2] it should be stressed that their literary relationship was a strong one. Borges's role resembled that of a father figure for Calvino and the impact of the Argentine writer upon the younger Italian in terms of literary

---

[1] There have been a great number of critical works on both authors. For interesting analyses on Borges's poetics, see Sylvia Molloy, *Las letras de Borges y otros ensayos*, 2nd edn (Rosario: Beatriz Viterbo, 1999; first publ. 1979); Gene H. Bell-Villada, *Borges and his Fiction: A Guide to his Mind and Art*, rev edn (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 2000; first publ. 1981). Recent anthologies of critical essays include Evelyn Fishburn, ed., *Borges and Europe Revisited* (London: University of London, Institute of Latin American Studies, 1998); Rafael Olea Franco, ed., *Borges: desesperaciones aparentes y consuelos secretos* (Mexico: El Colegio de México, Centro de Estudios Lingüísticos y Literarios, 1999); Alfonso de Toro, and Fernando de Toro, eds, *Jorge Luis Borges: pensamiento y saber en el siglo XX* (Frankfurt: Vervuert, 1999); Alfonso de Toro, Fernando de Toro, and Susanna Regazzoni, eds, *El siglo de Borges*, 2 vols (Frankfurt: Vervuert, 1999). For a list of critical works on Borges published before 1984, see David William Foster, *Jorge Luis Borges: An Annotated Primary and Secondary Bibliography* (New York and London: Garland, 1984); and Nicolás Helft, *Jorge Luis Borges: bibliografía completa* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultural Económica, 1997). In Calvino's case, four recent Italian and English publications are also worth consulting, see Martin McLaughlin, *Italo Calvino* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998); Silvio Perrella, *Calvino* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1999); Domenico Scarpa, *Italo Calvino* (Milan: Mondadori, 1999); and Constance Markey, *Italo Calvino: A Journey toward Postmodernism* (Florida: University Press of Florida, 1999). Interesting anthologies of critical essays on Calvino include Giorgio Bertone, ed., *Italo Calvino: la letteratura, la scienza, la città* (Genoa: Marietti, 1988); Giorgio Bertone, ed., *Italo Calvino: A Writer for the Next Millennium* (Alexandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 1998).

[2] Borges wrote an autobiography, first published in English. See Borges, 'An Autobiographical Essay', in *The Aleph and Other Stories 1933-1969*, trans. by Norman Thomas di Giovanni (London: Picador, 1973), pp. 123-66. For more details on his life, see Emir Rodríguez Monegal, *Jorge Luis Borges: A Literary Biography* (New York: Paragon, 1988), Horacio Salas, *Borges: una biografía* (Buenos Aires: Planeta, 1994), and James Woodall, *The Man in the Mirror of the Book: A Life of Jorge Luis Borges* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1996). For Calvino's life, see 'Cronologia', ed. by Mario Barenghi and Bruno Falcetto, in Italo Calvino, *Romanzi e racconti*, 3 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 1991), i, pp. LXII-LXXXVI; Patrizio Barbaro, and Fabio Pierangeli, *Italo Calvino: biografia per immagini* (Turin: Gribaudo, 1995).

concepts and styles is beyond doubt.[3] In an interview with the translator William Weaver, Calvino declared his indebtedness to Borges:

> [Borges] has been very important for me; and I would say that my encounter with him is facilitated by the fact that he also loves a certain English, or Anglo-Saxon, literature, and its taste for logic and geometry. I began reading [Borges's work] in the 1950's, first in French translation, then in Italian. Later I began to read him in Spanish, especially the stories. [...] In later years, writers more conscious of literary forms, like Borges or like Nabokov, have certainly been closer to me.[4]

Calvino's fascination with Borges's literary enterprise also led him to publish a critical piece on Borges[5] and to analyse Borges's work in one of his last publications, *Lezioni americane*.[6] Given this connection, it is not surprising that there are several essays written on the comparative poetics and rhetoric of the two authors.[7] However, a full-length comparative study has yet to be published. This thesis is intended to fill such space by exploring the literary relationship between the two authors, as reflected in similarities in their works, which centre

---

[3] The influence of Borges on Italian writers in the latter half of the twentieth century was pervasive, especially after his *Ficciones* was translated into Italian in 1955. For more details, see Roberto Paoli, *Presencia de Borges en la literatura italiana contemporánea* (Mendoza: Universidad Nacional de Cuyo, 1994).

[4] William Weaver, 'Calvino: An Interview and its Story', in *Calvino Revisited*, ed. by Franco Ricci (Ottawa: Dovehouse, 1989), 17-31 (p. 28).

[5] Italo Calvino, 'Jorge Luis Borges', in his *Saggi 1945-1985*, ed. by Mario Barenghi, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 1995), i, 1292-1300 (first publ. as 'I gomitoli di Jorge Luis', *La Repubblica*, 16 October 1984).

[6] Calvino, *Lezioni americane*, in his *Saggi 1945-1985*, i, 627-753 (pp. 728-30) (first publ. as *Lezioni americane: sei proposte per il prossimo millennio* (Milan: Garzanti, 1988). This posthumous publication is a collection of essays that Calvino planned to deliver as part of his Charles Eliot Norton Lectures at Harvard University in the academic year 1985-86.

[7] There is a collection of papers presented at the International Colloquium on Borges and Calvino organised by the Centre of Latin American Research at the University of Poitiers. See Alain Sicard, and Fernando Moreno, eds, *Borges, Calvino, la literatura*, 2 vols (Madrid: Fundamentos, 1996). There is also a more recent collection of essays presented at the University of Buffalo. See *Literary Philosophers: Borges, Calvino, Eco*, ed. by Jorge J. E. Gracia, Carolyn Korsmeyer, and Rodolphe Gasché (New York and London: Routledge, 2002).

on such metaphysical issues as truth and reality by way of their fantastic narrative techniques. Specifically, it aims to analyse how, in their narratives, truth and knowledge are engendered and represented through language and man's cognitive processes, and how the limits of language and human cognition constrain the conceptualisation of the real, creating a significant distinction between representation and reality.

First, it is important to contextualise the thesis in terms of methodology, to give some ideas to the reader as to how it may be located in relation to trends and directions of comparative literature.[8] When Borges discusses the dynamics of literary transmission in 'La flor de Coleridge', he embraces the notion of literature as an independent domain, claiming that 'la literatura es lo esencial, no los individuos',[9] and also argues that the domain of literature should transcend national boundaries:

> Durante muchos años, yo creí que la casi infinita literatura estaba en un hombre. Ese hombre fue Carlyle, fue Johannes Becher, fue Whitman, fue Rafael Cansinos-Asséns, fue De Quincey.[10]

Borges's choice of authors to represent his literary domain is eclectic and by no means bound by national territories.[11] His view of literature as a transnational

---

[8] For the history of comparative literature as a discipline, see René Wellek, 'The Name and Nature of Comparative Literature', in *Comparatists at Work: Studies in Comparative Literature*, ed. by Stephen G. Nichols, Jr., and Richard B. Vowles (Waltham, Massachusetts, Toronto, and London: Blaisdell, 1968), pp. 3-27; Henri Peyre, 'Seventy-Five Years of Comparative Literature: A Backward and a Forward Glance', *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature*, 8 (1959), 18-26. For a more recent history, see Susan Bassnett, *Comparative Literature: A Critical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), pp. 12-30; Franca Sinopoli, 'La storia comparata della letteratura', in *Introduzione alla letteratura comparata*, ed. by Armando Gnisci (Milan: Mondadori, 1999), pp. 1-50.

[9] Borges, 'La flor de Coleridge', in his *Obras completas 1923-1972* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1974), pp. 639-41 (p. 640).

[10] Borges, 'La flor de Coleridge', p. 641.

[11] In another essay, Borges argues that the idea that literature should be analysed in terms of national boundaries is relatively new and arbitrary: '[...] no sé si es necesario decir que la idea de

enterprise corresponds with one of the main defining tenets of comparative literature, which is an attempt to bridge borders between nations and to establish links between literatures. Henry H. H. Remak, for instance, defines comparative literature as 'the study of literature beyond confines of one particular country [...]'.[12] Calvino's concept of literature also transcends nationalism. In his essay 'Perché leggere i classici', he lists various reasons why people should read classic writers and imagines a blissful scenario in which a person is lucky enough to have time to read them:

> Certo si può ipotizzare una persona beata che dedichi il 'tempo-lettura' delle sue giornate esclusivamente a leggere Lucrezio, Luciano, Montaigne, Erasmo, Quevedo, Marlowe, il *Discour de la Méthode*, il *Wilhelm Meister*, Coleridge, Ruskin, Proust e Valéry, con qualche divagazione verso Murasaki o le saghe islandesi.[13]

What Calvino means by 'classics' are literary works from various countries across the world. Like Borges, Calvino views literature as transnational in nature. As a consequence, this thesis, which aims to analyse the works of Borges and Calvino, inescapably enters into the realm of comparative literature, since to deal with the works of Borges and Calvino, it is important to explore the interconnections that their works have with other literatures, irrespective of national boundaries.

---

que una literatura debe definirse por los rasgos diferenciales de país que la produce es una idea relativamente nueva; también es nueva y arbitraria la idea de que los escritores deben buscar temas de sus países' (Borges, 'El escritor argentina y la tradición', in his *Obras completas 1923-1972*, pp. 267-74 (first publ. in *Cursos y conferencias*, 250-52 (1953)).

[12] Henry H. H. Remak, 'Comparative Literature, its Definition and Function', in *Comparative Literature: Method and Perspective*, ed. by Newton P. Stallknecht and Horst Frenz (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1961), pp. 3-37 (p. 3).

[13] Calvino, 'Perché leggere i classici', in his *Saggi 1945-1985*, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 1995), ii, 1816-24 (p. 1822) (first publ. as 'Italiani, vi esorto ai classici', *L'Espresso*, 28 June 1981, pp. 58-68). His italics.

This thesis also consciously sets out to compare the works of two authors from different literary spheres. Following what Remak calls 'the American school' of comparative literature, it aims to compare the works of two authors without placing focus on issues of influence and reception.[14] Instead of conducting an investigation into the transfer of influence of Borges on Calvino or vice versa (the first of which is evinced by Calvino's interview quoted at the beginning), it adopts the technique of what S. S. Prawer calls 'placing', which he defines as:

> the mutual illumination of several texts, or series of texts, considered side by side; the greater understanding we derive from juxtaposing a number of (frequently very different) works, authors and literary traditions.[15]

By placing Borges alongside Calvino, this thesis hopes to shed new light upon how representation and the human condition figure in the works of both authors, with the ultimate aim of gaining fresh insight into their narratives. This juxtaposition is synchronic in nature since it seeks to highlight the difference in attitudes towards the human condition in their works, rather than any thematic developments during their literary careers. By using the issue of representation as

---

[14] This argument is made in the light of the distinction between the French and American schools of comparative literature. According to Remak, even though both schools agree upon a definition of comparative literature as the study of literature beyond national boundaries, 'the French are inclined to favour questions which can be solved on the basis of factual evidence (often involving personal documents). They tend to exclude literary criticism from the domain of comparative literature' (Remak, 'Comparative Literature, its Definition and Function', p. 4). In other words, the French school is inclined to focus on issues of influence, reception, intermediaries, and other facts which can only be positivistically ascertained. On the other hand, the American school, according to Remak, tries to avoid what he labels as 'influence studies', since, he believes, 'it may contribute less to the elucidation of the essence of a literary work than studies comparing authors, works, styles, tendencies and literatures in which no influence can or is intended to be shown' (p. 5). For Remak, the American school of comparative literature is also distinct in that, unlike the French, they also choose to explore 'the relationship between literature and other fields [...]' (p. 6). However, it should be noted here that not all scholars agree with this divide. Harry Levin, for example, considers the Franco-American disciplinary conflict to be rather 'a methodological issue between two generations — and, as such, a manifestation of growth' (Levin, 'Comparing the Literature', *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature*, 17 (1968), 5-16 (p. 12)).

[15] S. S. Prawer, *Comparative Literary Studies: An Introduction* (London: Duckworth, 1973), p. 144.

a framework, this thesis also aims to explore, to an extent, the relationship between philosophy and literature.[16] It should be noted here that both Borges and Calvino were absorbed in philosophy and their essays testify to their interest in such fundamental philosophical issues as time, space, knowledge, and consciousness.[17] According to Calvino, the relationship between philosophy and literature resembles that between theory and practice: if philosophy explores general ideas and 'theorises' them on an abstract level, literature, in concrete terms, puts those ideas into practice by providing scenarios in which those ideas can be played out and further interrogated. He states:

> Lo sguardo dei filosofi attraversa l'opacità del mondo, ne cancella lo spessore carnoso, riduce la varietà dell'esistente a una ragnatela di relazioni tra concetti generali, fissa le regole per cui un numero finito di pedine muovendosi su una scacchiera esaurisce un numero forse infinito di combinazioni. Arrivano gli scrittori e agli astratti pezzi degli scacchi sostituiscono re regine cavalli torri con un nome, una forma determinata, un insieme d'attributi reali o equini, al posto della scacchiera distendono campi di battaglia polverosi o mari in burrasca [...][18]

Calvino's beautiful metaphors do not only show the conflictual relationship between the two fields, they also indicate a dynamic continuity between them. Comparative literature, by linking philosophy and literature together, becomes at the same time both a battlefield and a rich, productive area where new lines of

---

[16] Remak recognises the importance of interdisciplinary study and regards it as one of the five major directions that comparative literature should take. See Remak, 'The Future of Comparative Literature', *Proceedings of the 8th Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association*, 2 vols (Stuttgart: Kunst und Wissen, Erich Bieber, 1980), ii, 429-37 (p. 436).

[17] In Borges's case, see, for example, essays such as 'Historia de la eternidad', 'La doctrina de los ciclos', and 'El tiempo circular' in the collection *Historia de la eternidad* (1936); 'La esfera de Pascal' and 'Nueva refutación del tiempo' in the collection *Otras inquisiciones* (1952). These essays are included in *Obras completas 1923-1972*. In Calvino's case, see his essays in *Collezione di sabbia*, in his *Saggi 1945-1985*, i, 407-625 (first publ. 1984).

[18] Calvino, 'Filosofia e letteratura', in his *Saggi 1945-1985*, i, 188-96 (pp. 188-89) (first publ. 1967).

knowledge may be produced. In a sense, this thesis aims to do just what Calvino argues: it intends to explore how the narratives of Borges and Calvino respond to the issue of representation. Their works become a platform whereby philosophical issues are 'concretised' and the implications of these issues are further explored.

It can thus be said that this thesis borders on the field of thematics since the philosophical issues of representation and reality are key themes. Even though there have been debates as to whether philosophical themes should be the main object of study, since they are 'externals' and therefore do not necessarily deserve critical attention,[19] I subscribe to Harry Levin's view of this debate. According to him:

> a writer's choice of a subject is an aesthetic decision, [...] the conceptual outlook is a determining part of the structural pattern, [and] the message is somehow inherent in the medium. [...] Whatever the writer undertakes to describe, by the act of his description, becomes a contributing feature of the final arrangement.[20]

Levin's statement allows literary critics to focus on thematics without any qualms.[21] Borges's and Calvino's treatments of these philosophical issues are a

---

[19] For more details, see René Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1942). Wellek and Warren develop this line of argument from Benedetto Croce's view that the study of thematics is 'arid'. See Croce, 'Comparative Literature', trans. by C. Maxwell Lancaster, in *Comparative Literature: The Early Years. An Anthology of Essays*, pp. 215-23 (first publ. in *La critica*, 1 (1903), pp. 77-80).

[20] Harry Levin, 'Thematics and Criticism', in *The Disciplines of Criticism: Essays in Literary Theory, Interpretation, and History*, ed. by Peter Demetz, Thomas Greene, and Lowry Nelson, Jr. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1968), pp. 125-145 (p. 145). Thematics can be seen as developed from the German trend of *Stoffgeschichte*. For more details, see Ulrich Weisstein, *Comparative Literature and Literary Theory: Survey and Introduction*, trans. by William Riggan (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1973; first publ. 1968), esp. pp. 124-49.

[21] George Steiner also considers thematic studies to be one of the three directions of comparative literature, claiming that: 'Thematic studies form a third 'centre of gravity' in comparative literature. Analysis, notably by Russian formalists and structural anthropologists, has confirmed

subject worthy of comparative analysis since a juxtaposition of their texts in this light can provide an explanation how and why the issues of representation and the human condition are crucial to the understanding of their texts. Since the thesis explores how the philosophical theme of representation is treated in the narratives of Borges and Calvino, this introduction will examine its conceptual development as perceived by various critics, such as Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Jean- François Lyotard, and Alan Wilde, with the aim of placing their narratives in perspective, followed by an overview of how literature can be placed with regard to these theoretical positions.

A Genealogy of Representation

Representation is a highly complex notion and seems to pervade all fields of human sciences, functioning as a fundamental platform on which the production and communication of knowledge is made possible. According to an etymological study of the concept by Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, representation is derived from the Latin *repraesentare*, which means 'to make present or manifest or to present again'.[22] For Pitkin, the concept of representation is not intrinsically ambiguous, even though the implications of the concept can be seen in fields as remotely connected as aesthetics and political theory and it is possible to formulate a comprehensive definition of representation that can cover its applications in various contexts. For Pitkin:

---

the remarkable economy of motifs, the recurrent, rule-bound techniques of narrative which prevail in mythologies, folk-tales and the telling of stories in literature the world over' (George Steiner, 'What Is Comparative Literature?', in his *No Passion Spent: Essays 1978-1996* (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1996), pp. 142-59 (pp. 153-54)). Even though this thesis will not strictly follow anthropological and mythological paths suggested by Steiner, it will follow a similar route by focusing on certain ideas and motifs in the narratives of Borges and Calvino and pursuing their developments.

[22] See Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, 'Appendix on Etymology', in her *The Concept of Representation* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), pp. 241-52 (p. 241). See also Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Fontana, 1988; first publ. 1976), pp. 266-69.

> representation, taken generally, means the making present *in some sense* of something which is nevertheless *not* present literally or in fact. [...] we can simply say that in representation something not literally present is considered as present in a nonliteral sense.[23]

Pitkin's definition leads to a polarisation of two entities, an object and that which it represents; it also paradoxically implies a sense of connection between the two entities as the object is regarded as referring to another object not literally present.

While Pitkin focuses on the act of making present something hitherto absent, and the polarisation of the object and its referent, W. J. T. Mitchell moves a step further. For Mitchell, representation involves a triangular relationship: 'representation is always *of* something or someone, *by* something or someone, *to* someone'.[24] Like Pitkin, Mitchell's definition presupposes two distinct entities: the representational material and that which it represents (the referent). Nonetheless, this relation (or what Mitchell calls the 'axis of representation') is made more complicated by another dimension: the relation between the maker and the beholder (or in terms of verbal representation, the author and the reader). Mitchell terms this dimension the 'axis of communication'.[25] To gain validity, representation relies upon the coexistence of these two relations (see figure 1).

---

[23] Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation*, pp. 8-9. Her italics.

[24] W. J. T. Mitchell, 'Representation', in *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, ed. by Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin, 2nd edn (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995; first publ. 1990), pp. 11-22 (p. 12). His italics.

[25] See Mitchell, 'Representation', pp. 11-22. This triangular concept of representation is also explored by Roland Barthes, for whom representation is not only a matter of correspondence between words and things. The subject's involvement should also be considered: 'Representation is not defined directly by imitation: even if one gets rid of notions of the 'real', of the 'vraisemblable', of the 'copy', there will still be representation for so long as a subject (author, reader, spectator or voyeur) casts his *gaze* towards a horizon on which he cuts out the base of a triangle, his eye (or his mind) forming the apex' (Barthes, 'Diderot, Brecht, Eisenstein', in his *Image, Music, Text*, trans. by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), pp. 69-78 (p. 69) (first publ. 1973) His italics).

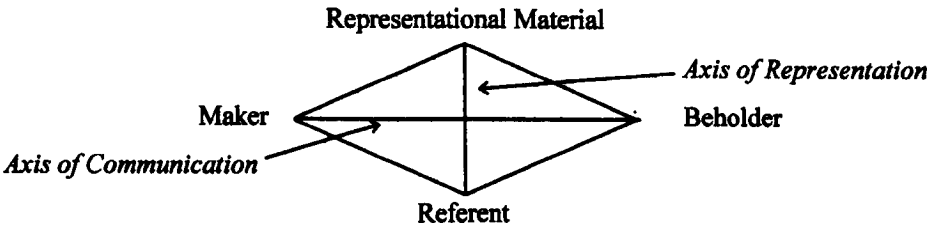

Figure 1 An adaptation of Mitchell's paradigm of representation[26]

For Mitchell, representation is made possible not only by a successful relation between the representational material and the referent; the importance of the maker-beholder relationship should not be ignored. Unlike Pitkin's, what is significant in Mitchell's theory is an introduction of the human factor as he makes the reader realise that an act of representation cannot happen on its own; it needs a witness. Thanks to the inclusion of the human factor, Mitchell's paradigm will be employed in this introduction as a theoretical backdrop against which other conceptual analyses of representation are discussed.

In his essay 'Sending: On Representation',[27] Jacques Derrida offers his influential view of the conceptual development of representation from the Middle Ages to modern times. Taking his cue from Martin Heidegger,[28] Derrida perceives that representation is a relatively new concept in western philosophy. The Middle Ages, for example, did not recognise the concept of representation; people in those times regarded everything as presence and human perception was not viewed as an intervention into the process of reaching such presence:

---

[26] Mitchell, 'Representation', p. 12.
[27] Jacques Derrida, 'Sending: On Representation', trans. by Peter and Mary Ann Caws, *Social Research*, 49 (1982), pp. 294-326.
[28] See Martin Heidegger, 'The Age of the World Picture', in his *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. by William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), pp. 115-54.

> [...] the Middle Ages relates itself essentially to what-is as to an *ens creatum*. 'To be something that-is' ('être-un-étant') means to belong to the created order; this thus corresponds to God according to the analogy of what-is (*analogia entis*), but [...] the being of what-is never consists in an object (*Gegenstand*) brought before man, fixed, stopped, available for the human subject who would possess a representation of it.[29]

For Derrida, in the Middle Ages representation as such was not recognised since words and things were not considered to be essentially separate. It had not been acknowledged until the dawn of the modern age when the intervention of the human subject in the process of conceptualisation was recognised, especially its role of engendering the subject/object divide:

> It is thus only in the modern period (Cartesian or post-Cartesian) that what-is is determined as an ob-ject present *before* and *for* a subject in the form of *repraesentatio* or *Vorstellen*.[30]

The intrusion of the human subject that allows for an act of representation corresponds to Mitchell's concept of the twin axes of representation and communication that underlie all representational practices.

According to Derrida, representation is a highly complex concept whose essence always implies its constraints. He describes representation as an act of sending (*envoi*), an infinite movement between presence and representation, in which he recognises a persistent desire to locate presence, or to impose a fixed identity on meaning:

---

[29] Derrida, 'Sending: On Representation', p. 306. His italics.
[30] Derrida, 'Sending: On Representation', p. 307. His italics.

> Under the diversity of words from diverse languages, under the diversity of the uses of the same words, under the diversity of contexts or of syntactic systems, the same sense or the same referent, the same representative content would keep its inviolable identity. Language, every language, would be representative, a system of representatives, but the content represented, what is represented by this representation (a meaning, a thing, and so on) would be a presence and not a representation.[31]

For Derrida, this desire for presence is problematic because it implies a stabilised concept of referent, an idea with which he disagrees since he considers the referent to be nothing but another representation,[32] a constant to-and-fro journey from the surface of representation to bottomless presence. This can be seen from Derrida's view of representation as a power to bring presence back to presentation (and vice versa) repetitively (as signalled by the prefix *re-* in the word *representation* itself):

> *Praesentatio* signifies the fact of presenting and *re-praesentatio* that of *rendering* present, of a summoning as a power-of-bringing-back-to-presence. And this power-of-bringing-back, in a repetitive way, is marked simultaneously by the re- of representation *and* in this positionality, this power-of-placing, disposing, putting [...][33]

Following his logic, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to escape the network of representation and arrive at a primal presence which is anterior to a representational system:

---

[31] Derrida, 'Sending: On Representation', p. 303.
[32] Derrida considers writing, as representational material, to be a free play, an endless displacement of meaning. For more details, see Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, rev edn (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997; first publ. 1967), pp. 27-73.
[33] Derrida, 'Sending: On Representation', pp. 307-8. His italics.

> whatever the strength and the obscurity of this dominant current, the authority of representation constrains us, imposing itself on our thought through a whole dense, enigmatic, and heavily stratified history. It programs us and precedes us and warns us too severely to make a mere object of it, a representation, an object of representation confronting us, before us like a theme.[34]

Truth and reality, according to Derrida, are bound by and totally immersed in the concept of representation, since he challenges the model of representation, in which the representational material is directly referred to by the referent (i.e. Mitchell's axis of representation). If the arrival of Derrida's modern age signals recognition of the distance between the presence of the referent and the act of representation, then meaning is not derived from representational material referring directly to transcendental presence. Rather, it is partially constructed by language and influenced by the act of representation perpetrated by human beings. In other words, reality is mediated in and by the process of representation.

Derrida's theorisation of representation in this light can be examined alongside Michel Foucault's *The Order of Things* as it also offers an historical analysis of representation in the West from the Italian Renaissance to modern times.[35] For Foucault, the history of the Western world has undergone two significant discontinuities in terms of representation. The first one provided a disjunction between the age of resemblance and the classical age. As with Derrida's analysis of the Middle Ages, Foucault argues that there was no representation in the age

---

[34] Derrida, 'Sending: On Representation', p. 304.

[35] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (London: Routledge, 1970; first publ. 1966). Foucault's archeological study can be seen as a major watershed of the conceptual change in representation. For more details on the conceptual development of representation, see Stephen David Ross, *The Ring of Representation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992); Christopher Prendergast, *The Triangle of Representation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

of resemblance (around the sixteenth century) since people believed that their knowledge could be derived from understanding the 'signatures' of nature through four different methods.[36] In this period, representation was a form of repetition, a discovery of resemblance extant in nature:

> By positing resemblance as the link between signs and what they indicate [...], sixteenth-century knowledge condemned itself to never knowing anything but the same thing, and to knowing that thing only at the unattainable end of an endless journey.[37]

In Foucault's age of resemblance, the notion of representation did not exist because there was no polarisation between the representational material and the referent. In its place was the dominant belief in the idea of 'signatures', that the world was covered with signs of similarities, be they natural or linguistic, awaiting decipherment:

> There is no difference between the visible marks that God has stamped upon the surface of the earth, so that we may know its inner secrets, and the legible words that the Scriptures, or the sages of Antiquity, have set down in the books preserved for us by tradition.[38]

Words and things, for Foucault, were equally considered to be signs endowed by God. His construction of the resemblance age implies that the focus was not as much on a linking between two different entities as on a discovery of sameness

---

[36] These four methods are *convenientia* (the adjacency of places), *aemulatio* (the resemblance without spatial contact), *analogy* (the drawing together of two relations), and *sympathies* (the assimilation of distinct objects). For more details, see Foucault, *The Order of Things*, pp. 17-25.
[37] Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 30.
[38] Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 33.

in nature. Such resemblance is also explored by Borges in his essay 'Historia de los ecos de un nombre', in which he discusses how, in ancient times, words were not regarded as symbols but as powerful things in themselves.[39] According to Borges:

> [...] para el pensamiento mágico, o primitivo, los nombres no son símbolos arbitrarios sino parte vital de los que definen. Así, los aborígenes de Australia reciben nombres secretos que no deben oír los individuos de la tribu vecina. Entre los antiguos egipcios prevaleció una costumbre análoga; cada persona recibía dos nombres: el nombre pequeño que era de todos conocido, y el nombre verdadero o gran nombre, que se tenía oculto.[40]

From these examples, words were not considered to be different from things; their powers were made manifest upon an act of intoning or chanting them. Borges's discussion of such powers of words can be linked to Foucault's resemblance age in which words did not represent things; both words and things were regarded as signs of nature or secrets of the universe that needed to be interpreted.

It was not until the seventeenth century that the first significant discontinuity took place. For Foucault, Cervantes's *Don Quijote* signalled this shift since the novel deals with a disjunction between words and things: they were no longer part of God's signatures in the world but two different entities altogether.[41] This is marked by Don Quijote's attempts to prove that what he has read from chivalric romances is true in reality. For Foucault, Don Quijote's journey becomes 'a quest

---

[39] Borges, 'Historia de los ecos de un nombre', in his *Obras completas 1923-1972*, pp. 750-53 (first publ. 1955).
[40] Borges, 'Historia de los ecos de un nombre', p. 750.
[41] '[I]n the sixteenth century, one asked oneself how it was possible to know that a sign did in fact designate what it signified; from the seventeenth century, one began to ask how a sign could be linked to what it signified' (Foucault, *The Order of Things*, pp. 42-43).

for similitudes'[42] which will lead to the disillusionment of the protagonist in the end because he no longer finds that reality actually corresponds with what he has read. Owing to this, Foucault believes *Don Quijote* heralded the classical age, in which the concept of representation emerged. In this period, a separation between words and things (i.e. between the representational material and the referent) was gradually realised:

> resemblances and signs have dissolved their former alliance; similitudes have become deceptive and verge upon the visionary and madness; things still remain stubbornly within their ironic identity: they are no longer anything but what they are; words wander off on their own, without content, without resemblance to fill their emptiness; they are no longer the marks of things [...].[43]

Like Foucault, Borges also agrees on this divide between words and things in *Don Quijote*.[44] In one of his essays, 'Magias parciales del Quijote',[45] Borges discusses Cervantes's narrative in terms of realism and argues that 'la forma del Quijote le hizo contraponer a un mundo imaginario poético, un mundo real prosaico'.[46] For him, *Don Quijote* signals a distinction between the real and the poetic worlds, an essential divide which he utilises as part of his philosophical inquiry in much of his work throughout his literary career.[47]

---

[42] Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 47.
[43] Foucault, *The Order of Things*, pp. 47-48.
[44] It should be noted here that *Don Quijote* is one of the most important narratives for Borges, especially in its influence on his narrative development and concept. In an interview, he discussed the magic of *Don Quijote* and how much he was fascinated with the edition which he first read, mentioning that: 'It happened to me with the *Quijote*. I read it in the Garnier edition. I don't know if you remember those red volumes with the gold lettering. [...] I read the *Quijote* in another edition, but I had the feeling that it wasn't the real *Quijote*. I asked a friend to get me the Garnier edition. He surprised me by later bringing me the book with the same steel engravings, the same footnotes, and also with the same *errata*. All that forms part of the book for me' (César Fernandez Moreno, 'Weary of Labyrinths: An Interview with Jorge Luis Borges', *Encounter*, 32 (1969), 3-14 (p. 4)).
[45] Borges, 'Magias parciales del Quijote', in his *Obras completas 1923-1972*, pp. 667-69 (first publ. 1952).
[46] Borges, 'Magias parciales del Quijote', p. 667.
[47] This idea is played upon again in a passage included in his collection *El hacedor*, in which he states that: 'toda esa trama [del *Don Quijote*] fue la oposición de dos mundos: el mundo irreal de

Apart from the separation between words and things, Foucault's classical episteme[48] also signalled an acknowledgement of language as a means of truth, rather than 'truth' itself:

> In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the peculiar existence and ancient solidity of language as a thing inscribed in the fabric of the world were dissolved in the functioning of representation; all language had value only as discourse. The art of language was a way of 'making a sign' — of simultaneously signifying something and arranging signs around that thing [...][49]

Such recognition of the separation of words and things and the role of language as a means by which reality is communicated signalled the emergence of representation.

It can be said that, according to Foucault, the appearance of representation in the seventeenth century was, in the main, a privileging of Mitchell's first dimension, the relation between the representational material and the referent (i.e. the axis of representation). In this period, the second dimension (i.e. the axis of communication) was less significant than the first. This is because, even though reality was considered to be mediated by language in this era, the relationship

---

los libros de caballerías, el mundo cotidiano y común del siglo XVII' (Borges, 'Parábola de Cervantes y de Quijote', in his *Obras completas 1923-1972*, p. 799). For more details, see Alfonso de Toro, 'Cervantes, Borges y Foucault: la realidad como viaje a través de los signos', in *El siglo de Borges*, ii, pp. 45-65.

[48] The 'episteme' is a word coined by Foucault to connote the space in which knowledge is conceptualised. It is the ground which enables the production of certain kind of knowledge and suppress others. In fact, Foucault argues that his task in *The Order of Things* is to uncover the different epistemes underlying the development of western civilisation: 'what I am attempting to bring to light is the epistemological field, the *episteme* in which knowledge, envisaged apart from all criteria having reference to its rational value or to its objective forms, grounds its positivity and thereby manifests a history which is not that of its growing perfection, but rather that of its conditions of possibility' (Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. xxii. His italics).

[49] Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 43.

between words and things was still a transparent one. The predominant belief was that language was a faithful means by which reality could be conveyed without distortion. In other words, the essence and role of language in the classical age were not problematised:

> It is [...] possible to grasp how solid and tightly knit the unity of language is in the Classical experience. It is this unity that, through the play of an articulated designation, enables resemblance to enter the propositional relation, that is, a system of identities and differences as based upon the verb *to be* and manifested by the network of *names*. The fundamental task of Classical 'discourse' is *to ascribe a name to things, and in that name to name their being.*[50]

The classical episteme still allowed language to be fully committed to designating reality. By giving names to things, language was able once again to convey a sense of resemblance through its representational system. According to Jon Stratton, in the classical age 'perfect representation [was] possible, [...] knowledge [could] be identified with an absolute Truth, [...] language [could] provide a perfect representation of the world'.[51] Even though the concept of reality was considered to be nothing but representation, the essence of truth was not directly challenged. Representation was still held to be a loyal portrayal of reality and truth itself was considered to be attainable through a representational system.

If, in the classical era, absolute truth was attainable, engendered through the correspondence between representational material and its referents, the modern era experienced a shift in focus. Foucault believes that this epistemic shift has

---

[50] Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 120. His italics.
[51] Jon Stratton, *Writing Sites: A Genealogy of the Postmodern World* (New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990), p. 6.

occurred approximately since the end of the eighteenth century, when representational limits began to be acknowledged. In the modern period, truth is essentially challenged as representation takes its place. Language is no longer seen as a faithful means by which reality is communicated; it is seen rather as a site in which meaning is generated. Calvino too deplores such a rift between language and reality in *Lezioni americane*. Even though he fosters the view that the writer should describe reality in a precise, accurate way, he believes that language always describes a world which is either more or less than the real:

> [...] l'una perché le lingue naturali dicono sempre qualcosa *in più* rispetto ai linguaggi formalizzati, comportano sempre una certa quantità di *rumore* che disturba l'essenzialistà dell'informazione; l'altra perché nel render conto della densità e continuità del mondo che ci circonda il linguaggio si rivela lacunoso, frammentario, dice sempre qualcosa in *meno* rispetto alla totalità dell'esperibile.[52]

Natural language, for Calvino, differs from formal language (i.e. mathematical language) in that it always says more than necessary, especially if one takes into account the fact that noise often disrupts its attempt to convey information.[53] On the other hand, Calvino also deplores the inadequacy of natural language in depicting the real since the real always exceeds its representative limits. Language, for Calvino, is divorced from reality and its function as representational material should be carefully interrogated. Borges also investigates the functions of language in one of his early essays, 'Palabrería para

---

[52] Calvino, *Lezioni americane*, p. 691. His italics.

[53] Calvino is touching upon the information theory, whereby the communication of information is regarded as successful if noise can be separated from it. Calvino's ideas are related to a work co-written by Claude E. Shannon and Warren Weaver. See Shannon, and Weaver, *The Mathematical Theory of Communication* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971). Calvino also refers to Shannon in his essay 'Cibernetica e fantasmi (appunti sulla narrativa come processo combinatorio)', in his *Saggi 1945-1985*, i, 205-25 (p. 229) (first publ. 1967).

versos',[54] also discussing the active role of language and its separation from the world:

> El mundo aparencial es complicadísimo y el idioma sólo ha efectuado una parte muy chica de las combinaciones infatigables que podrían llevarse a cabo con él.[55]

In this light, it can be argued that, if the referent was the privileged site in the classical era, the focus should move to the representational material in the modern epoch. The representational material no longer refers directly to its referents; instead, as Borges and Calvino imply, it problematises the representational system by becoming a site of presence in its own right. For Foucault, this coincided with a strong tendency in the modern era to view language as an independent discipline developing over time:

> Languages are no longer contrasted in accordance with what their words designate, but in accordance with the means whereby those words are linked together; from now on they will communicate, not via the intermediary of the anonymous and general thought they exist to represent, but directly from one to the other, thanks to these delicate instruments, so fragile in appearance yet so constant and so irreducible, by which words are arranged in relation to each other.[56]

The modern episteme recognises language as an autonomous, highly complex field and no longer regards the correspondence between words and things as smooth and direct. Such realisation of the 'thickness' of language brought about a

---

[54] Borges, 'Palabraría para versos', in his *El tamaño de mi esperanza* (Buenos Aires: Proa, 1926), pp. 43-49.
[55] Borges, 'Palabraría para versos', pp. 48-49.
[56] Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 236.

a crisis of representation and played a part in introducing the human factor into the picture. For Foucault, the modern episteme made possible new forms of thought, one of which directly concerns what he rhetorically regards as the birth of man,[57] a consideration of human participation in a representational system:

> The first [new form of thought in the modern episteme] questions the conditions of a relation between representations from the point of view of what in general makes them possible: it thus uncovers a transcendental field in which the subject, which is never given to experience (since it is not empirical), but which is finite (since there is no intellectual intuition), determines in its relation to an object = *x* all the formal conditions of experience in general [...][58]

This recognition of man's role in representation corresponds to the second dimension of Mitchell's paradigm, i.e. the axis of communication, which takes into account the active roles of the maker and the beholder.

It should be noted here that Foucault's *The Order of Things* was inspired by a passage from Borges's essay 'El idioma analítico de John Wilkins',[59] in which the Argentine writer cites what he claims to be a classificatory system from a Chinese encyclopaedia entitled *Emporio celestial de conocimientos benévolos*:

---

[57] 'Before the end of the eighteenth century, *man* did not exist — any more than the potency of life, the fecundity of labour, or the historical density of language. He is a quite recent creature, which the demiurge of knowledge fabricated with its own hands less than two hundred years ago' (Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 308).

[58] Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 243.

[59] In the preface to *The Order of Things*, Foucault states: 'This book first arose out of a passage in Borges, out of the laughter that shattered, as I read the passage, all the familiar landmarks of my thought — *our* thought, the thought that bears the stamp of our age and our geography — breaking up all the ordered surfaces and all the planes with which we are accustomed to tame the wild profusion of existing things, and continuing long afterwards to disturb and threaten with collapse our age-old distinction between the Same and the Other' (Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. xv. His italics).

> En sus remotas páginas está escrito que los animales se dividen en (a) pertenecientes al Emperador, (b) embalsamados, (c) amaestrados, (d) lechones, (e) sirenas, (f) fabulosos, (g) perros sueltos, (h) incluidos en esta clasificación, (i) que se agitan como locos, (j) innumerables, (k) dibujados con un pincel finí simo de pelo de camello, (l) etcétera, (m) que acaban de romper el jarrón, (n) que de lejos parecen moscas.[60]

For Foucault, this classificatory system marks an attempt by man to represent reality (in this case, the animal kingdom). However, Foucault is fascinated with how Borges challenges the 'naturalness' of the system of representation through the extraordinary juxtaposition of animals in this classification:

> It is not the 'fabulous' animals that are impossible, since they are designated as such, but the narrowness of the distance separating them from (and juxtaposing them to) the stray dogs, or the animals that from a long way off look like flies. What transgresses the boundaries of all imagination, of all possible thought, is simply that alphabetical series (a, b, c, d) which links each of those categories to all the others.[61]

Foucault thus uses Borges's Chinese classification as a prelude to his study of representation as a whole because in Borges's Chinese classification one can perceive the problematisation of representation. For example, infinite regression appears in (h) where all animals that are included in the system are included here again. It raises questions as to how human beings, in their endeavour to represent the universe, construct their systems. In other words, it can be seen as an attempt by man to impose order upon chaos, to rationalise the universe which seems to

---

[60] Borges, 'El idioma analítico de John Wilkins', in his *Obras completas 1923-1972*, pp. 706-9 (p. 708) (first publ. in *La Nación*, 8 February 1942).
[61] Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. xvi.

be too overwhelming for human beings through their own representational practices. Yet, for Borges, this is bound to fail because:

> notoriamente no hay clasificación del universe que no sea arbitraria y conjetural. La razón es muy simple: no sabemos qué cosa es el universo.[62]

According to Borges, since man does not know what precisely the universe is, these systems of classification that human beings construct in order to comprehend their universe cannot be completely representative: they are partly arbitrary or conjectural. Nonetheless, Foucault suggests that these classificatory systems as symbolic of representational practices are crucial and indispensable since they are considered to be manifestations of order human beings use when conceptualising their experience:

> Order is, at one and the same time, that which is given in things as their inner law, the hidden network that determines the way they confront one another, and also that which has no existence except in the grid created by a glance, an examination, a language; and it is only in the blank spaces of this grid that order manifests itself in depth as though already there, waiting in silence for the moment of its expression.[63]

When human beings set out to represent the universe, their representational system or what Foucault refers to as 'order' here is already implicit in their mindset. In other words, the way they see things already presupposes the adoption of certain grid or system that makes possible their representational practices. However, for Foucault, such a representational system as seen in Borges's Chinese classification is problematic since it is seen as partly

---

[62] Borges, 'El idioma analítico de John Wilkins', p. 708.
[63] Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. xx.

constructed by human whimsicality and a tendency towards conjecture. In this sense, Borges's categorisation marks the crisis of representation in Foucault's modern episteme, in which human beings play an active part in making possible the representation of the real. Such intrusion of the human factor creates an unbridgeable distance between representation and reality. While Borges uses the Chinese encyclopaedic classification to make manifest the arbitrariness of human imposition of order upon chaotic reality, Calvino links this order/chaos polarity to literature itself, arguing that literature represents such an urge to organise reality in an orderly way:

> [...] I try to deepen the contrast between sentences that are apparently linear, classical, and a reality that is undeniably complex. In the end, I believe that all writers share this fundamental urge even when they represent the most chaotic of realities. Just as the fact of *writing* implies an order.[64]

It can thus be argued that, while Borges plays upon the sense of ludicrous whimsicality of order that human beings impose on the world, Calvino sees this as unavoidable as it happens all the time whenever one represents the world. However, despite the difference, both Borges and Calvino share Foucault's notion of the modern episteme, in which representational practices, generated by human beings, are no longer expected to correspond with the real. As reality is regarded as highly intricate and human intrusion pervades on every level, be it language or cognitive processes, any attempt at representation is bound to be inadequate.

---

[64] Gregory L. Lucente, 'An Interview with Italo Calvino', *Contemporary Literature*, 26 (1985), 245-53 (p. 253).

Such mediation of representation in reality is explored in Borges's 'La biblioteca de Babel',[65] where absolute reality is denied to human beings. It is clear from the beginning that the library is analogous to the universe, especially in its infinite vastness:

> El universo (que otros llaman la Biblioteca) se compone de un número indefinido, y tal vez infinito, de galerías hexagonales, con vastos pozos de ventilación con el medio, cercados por barandas bajísimas.[66]

The narrator is imprisoned in the library, disoriented by the infinite number of books and bookshelves that surround him. For Borges, these books are analogous to representational practices in the sense that they are instruments that humans use in order to comprehend the universe. A librarian once discovered that there were no two identical books and that all possible variations and combinations of the whole set of alphabet and punctuation marks could be found in these books in the library. These facts make the library total in the sense that it contains all possible statements of the universe. This piece of news creates a hope among librarians who enjoy a solace that everything can be found in the library. A group of librarians then sets out to find the magical book that can reveal the secrets of the universe:

> Hace ya cuatro siglos que los hombres fatigan los hexágonos... Hay buscadores oficiales, *inquisidores*. Yo los he visto en el desempeño de su función: llegan siempre rendidos; hablan de galerías y de escaleras con el bibliotecario; alguna vez, toman el libro más cercano y lo hojean, en busca de palabras infames. Visiblemente, nadie espera descubrir nada.[67]

---

[65] Borges, 'La biblioteca de Babel', in his *Obras completas 1923-1972*, pp. 465-71 (first publ. 1941).
[66] Borges, 'La biblioteca de Babel', p. 465.
[67] Borges, 'La biblioteca de Babel', p. 468. His italics.

According to the narrator, such an anticipation is seen as ludicrous because the library is as vast as the universe, and so is the number of books. In addition, these books confuse mankind because, like the Chinese classificatory system, they are arbitrary and conjectural, blind to the essence of the universe, in the same way that representation of Foucault's modern episteme is seen as different from reality. Instead of helping guide the narrator through the library, the consultation of these books leads the narrator to the idea of 'la naturaleza informe y caótica de casi todos los libros'.[68] These books can be compared to representational practices in that both of them overwhelm and confuse human beings. Yet, Borges suggests that there is no escape from the library. These books are the only thing that could help them understand, albeit partially, the mechanisms of the universe. This is similar to Derrida's idea that representation is so crucial to human beings that they cannot think or experience outside a system of representation. If Borges plays upon the mimetic model of books, i.e. the idea that books represent the universe, he aims to show that this model has gone awry since in its representation, these books frustrate, rather than facilitate, human beings' attempts to comprehend the universe in its original complexity.

Calvino also explores the fundamental issue of representation in one of his Palomar stories, 'Il museo dei formaggi',[69] in which the protagonist Palomar visits a cheese shop in Paris. Like the books in Borges's 'La biblioteca de Babel', the variety of dairy products on display confuses and mesmerises Palomar. The title of the story is significant: for Palomar, the cheese shop is like a museum, in which a variety of cheeses are exhibited:

---

[68] Borges, 'La biblioteca de Babel', p. 466.
[69] Calvino, 'Il museo dei formaggi', in his *Romanzi e racconti*, ii, 933-36 (first publ. 1983).

> Questo negozio è un museo: il signor Palomar visitandolo sente, come al Louvre, dietro ogni oggetto esposto la presenza della civiltà che gli ha dato forma e che da esso prende forma.[70]

The fact that the cheeses are placed on display like exhibits in a museum connotes an act of representation, in which each cheese is represented as its own type and is, therefore, part of a system of classification. This can be seen in Palomar's recognition that the exhibition itself 'gives form to' and 'takes form away from' its objects. However, for Palomar, this kind of exhibition downplays the multiplicity of the real, reducing cheeses into specific categories. He prefers to contemplate the original complexity of reality, entertaining the idea that each type of cheese also has its own complex history and background:

> Dietro ogni formaggio c'è un pascolo d'un diverso verde sotto un diverso cielo: prati incrostati di sale che le maree di Normandia depositano ogni sera; prati profumati d'aromi al sole ventoso di Provenza; ci sono diversi armenti con le loro stabulazioni e transumanze; ci sono segreti di lavorazione tramandati nei secoli.[71]

In recognising this, Palomar perceives that there is a fundamental distinction between representation and reality. The fact that the cheese shop places these cheeses on display in an organised way, like exhibits in a museum, conveys a sense of reality being represented at the expense of its multiplicity. Like the narrator of Borges's 'La biblioteca de Babel', Palomor realises that there is more to reality since the represented is not exactly the same thing as the real.

---

[70] Calvino, 'Il museo dei formaggi', p. 935.
[71] Calvino, 'Il museo dei formaggi', p. 935.

The Human Condition and the Crisis of Representation

Even though the views of Derrida and Foucault should not be taken as the definitive picture of representation theory,[72] their similar concepts of representation in the modern age can be used to illuminate both Borges's 'La biblioteca de Babel' and Calvino's 'Il museo dei formaggi' as the inherent themes of both stories can be associated with the ideas that representation is all-embracing and that reality is always mediated in and by representational practices. For Derrida, this mediation is part and parcel of the human condition. The analysis of representation leads to a study of the human subject, since 'it is the self, here the human subject, which is the field in this relation, the domain and the measure of objects as representations, its own representations'.[73] What Derrida argues for is, in essence, a repositioning of the axes in Mitchell's representational paradigm. While Foucault's classical episteme marks a propensity to highlight the axis of representation without taking due consideration of the axis of communication, his modern episteme, as also theorised by Derrida, recognises the importance of the latter axis, in which the human factor and its role in mediating the representational process are emphasised.

This is what Foucault means by the birth of man in his definition of the modern epoch. Man, he argues, did not exist in the classical age since an act of representation was regarded as a straightforward correspondence between words and things. In the modern age, however, the recognition of representational limits

---

[72] Stuart Hall argues that there are at least three main approaches to representation, i.e. the reflective, the intentional, and the constructionist. The views offered by Derrida and Foucault may be linked to the third approach, as it claims that things do not have meaning in themselves but meaning is invested by human beings through their representational systems. For more details, see Hall, 'The Work of Representation', in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. by Stuart Hall (London: Sage, 1997), pp. 13-74 (esp. pp. 24-25).

[73] Derrida, 'Sending: On Representation', p. 307.

is closely connected with the emergence of man and his finitude, since language and man's process of knowledge conceptualisation act as a filter through which transcendental reality is screened. If man in the classical age was a perfect measure which objectively viewed the transformation of things into words, in the modern age man becomes at once a central yet problematic site since man's finitude is acknowledged. A question then arises as to how man's knowledge is produced now that man provides himself as a space whereby knowledge is conceptualised, an issue which did not occur in Foucault's classical age. In other words, the dominant question that persists in the modern age is not how man can learn more about nature through his own experience, but rather:

> How can man think what he does not think, inhabit as though by a mute occupation something that eludes him, animate with a kind of frozen movement that figure of himself that takes the form of a stubborn exteriority?[74]

The interrogation of the human factor in representation becomes problematic since it begs a question as to how that can be done without facing the dangers of solipsism. Foucault explores this space of the human subject and realises the importance of the search for 'the unthought', an inside-yet-outside concept which transcendentally allows man to see himself as a space of knowledge production:

> Man and the unthought are, at the archaeological level, contemporaries. [...] The unthought (whatever name we give it) is not lodged in man like a shrivelled-up nature or a stratified history; it is, in relation to man, the Other: the Other that is not only a brother but a twin, born, not of man, nor in man, but beside him and at the same time, in an identical newness, in an unavoidable duality.[75]

---

[74] Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 323.
[75] Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 326.

In other words, Foucault's idea of the unthought is paradoxical in nature. As part of the human desire to discover the foundation of the representational system (that is, the roots of knowledge production at the site of the human mind), the unthought signals the human mind's effort to analyse itself, a gesture which implies that man becomes both a subject and an object of representation at the same time.

If Foucault attaches this problematic issue of self-referential analysis to the modern era, Jean-François Lyotard considers this inward gesture to be central to his theory of representation,[76] arguing that the analysis of man as a problematic space arises out of 'a conflict between the faculties of a subject, the faculty to conceive of something [i.e. Foucault's notion of the unthought] and the faculty to 'present' something'.[77] In other words, the capability to represent the real is not compatible with the totality of the real arrived at through the use of conceptual reason. For both Foucault and Lyotard, the unpresentable is attributed to the human condition, the limits of which cause an essential discrepancy between representational material and that to which it refers. Lyotard associates this with the simultaneous feelings of pleasure and pain: 'the pleasure that reason should exceed all presentation, the pain that imagination or sensibility should not be equal to the concept'.[78] As long as these two faculties are not compatible, this human condition will always breed in us a nostalgic feeling for the whole, for the totality which cannot be attained through our sensory perception.[79]

---

[76] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. by R. Durand (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984; first publ. 1979). See also Lyotard, 'Defining the Postmodern' and 'Complexity and the Sublime', in *ICA Documents*, 4 (1985), pp. 6-12.

[77] Lyotard, 'Answering the Question: What Is Postmodernism?', in his *The Postmodern Condition*, pp. 71-82 (p. 77).

[78] Lyotard, 'Answering the Question: What Is Postmodernism?', p. 81.

[79] Lyotard's analysis of representation is inspired by Immanuel Kant's study of the sublime. The incompatibility between the two faculties has been laid out by Kant in his attempt to explain how the feeling of the sublime can be located in relation to that of the beautiful. For Kant, while the

On the one hand, Foucault and Lyotard, like Derrida, place emphasis upon Mitchell's axis of communication, deeming the relation between the maker and the beholder as important as that between the representational material and the referent. On the other, the intervention of man, for these critics, frustrates any attempt to bridge the distance between words and things in a representational system. The complexity of man provides a reason for such impossibility, since to deal with representation means to take issue with the human factor which is irreducibly subjective. Unlike what Foucault's classical episteme postulated, man no longer offers an objective core against which representation can be measured. Instead, man becomes a subjective entity that influences as well as mediates representation.

The focus on man can be seen in Borges's 'La biblioteca de Babel', in which, as we have seen, the narrator is imprisoned in the library and the secret of the universe is denied to him. It should be noted here that, even though the books in the library are infinite and produce an overwhelming effect upon man, they are products of mankind, like Borges's Chinese classification of the animal kingdom, in their attempt to comprehend the ultimate meaning of the universe. Yet, this effort is regarded as impossible due to a fundamental difference between the universe and mankind: the universe is infinite, whereas mankind is not. This sense of difference between human beings and the universe is made manifest in the narrative:

---

beautiful can be judged by understanding of the form of the object, the sublime can only be judged by reason, not by the empirical faculty, since it is distinguished in its limitlessness. Thus, the sublime defies the faculty of presentation. Kant goes on to define the sublime as 'an object (of nature) the representation of which determines the mind to think of the unattainability of nature as a presentation of ideas' (Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, ed. by Paul Guyer, trans. by Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000; first publ: 1790), p. 151. For more details, see Kant, 'Analytic of the Sublime', in his *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, pp. 128-230.

> El hombre, el imperfecto bibliotecario, puede ser obra del azar o de los demiurgos malévolos; el universo, con su elegante dotación de anaqueles, de tomos enigmáticos, de infatigables escaleras para el viajero y de letrinas para el bibliotecario sentado, sólo puede ser obra de un dios.[80]

The juxtaposition between man and the universe in Borges's story intensifies a sense of inadequacy, of human incapacity to comprehend the universe. In this respect, representation is a work of mankind and, therefore, is bound to fall short in its task of portraying the universe created by God. It can be said that Borges's 'La biblioteca de Babel' marks a return to a self-analysis of mankind in regard to its influence in representational practices.

While Borges's story centres around human incapacity to represent the real, Calvino's 'Il museo dei formaggi' focuses on how representation changes in accordance with the human subject. After he goes into the cheese shop and contemplates the variety of cheeses, Palomar endeavours to classify these products into different groups, an activity that likens the protagonist to a self-learner of an encyclopaedia:

> La formaggeria si presenta a Palomar come un'enciclopedia a un autodidatta; potrebbe memorizzare tutti i nomi, tentare una classificazione a seconda delle forme — a saponetta, a cilindro, a cupola, a palla —, a seconda della consistenza — seco, burroso, cremoso, venoso, compatto —, a seconda dei materiali estranei coinvolti nella crosta o nella pasta — uva passa, pepe, noci, sesamo, erbe, muffe [...].[81]

---

[80] Borges, 'La biblioteca de Babel', p. 466.
[81] Calvino, 'Il museo dei formaggi', pp. 934-35.

Like the classificatory system of the animal kingdom from Borges's Chinese encyclopaedia, Palomar, dividing these cheeses into groups using his own constructed categories, begins to feel the absurdity of his own action. He perceives that his own classificatory system is arbitrary and has nothing to do with the reality of these cheeses that lies behind his grids:

> [...] ma questo non l'avvicinerebbe d'un passo alla vera conoscenza, che sta nell'esperienza dei sapori, fatta di memoria e d'immaginazione insieme, e in base ad essa soltanto potrebbe stabilire una scala di gusti e preferenze e curiosità ed esclusioni.[82]

Memory and imagination, for Palomar, become the two factors that complicate reality and invalidate his own classificatory system, which is mainly based upon empirical senses. Like the protagonist of 'La biblioteca de Babel', Palomar encounters the multiplicity of the real which resists his attempt at representation. Human beings, in making sense of the real, need to create their own representational systems, be they the classification of books in Borges's monstrous library or Palomar's own categorisation of cheeses; however, these representational practices are seen to be futile as they are constructed or mediated by man and thereby do not represent reality in its original minutiae. The two stories, in this light, explore the role of man in representational practices and discuss the limits of man's cognition at the centre of representational systems.

[82] Calvino, 'Il museo dei formaggi', p. 935.

Literature and Representational Limits: From Modernism to Postmodernism

In their distinct yet related ways, Derrida, Foucault, and Lyotard explore the concept of representation and acknowledge its complexity. In more or less the same way, Derrida and Foucault argue that the history of the concept shows an increasing recognition of the role of human beings in an act of representation. Lyotard takes a step further and focuses on human subjectivity in his analysis of the human condition in representational practices. This section will analyse how the role of literature is placed in relation to these lines of argument and explore further how it influences theoretical attempts to differentiate between modernist and postmodern literature.

For Foucault, literature is significant in the sense that it is transgressive and subversive. Literature becomes a site where epistemic shift can be felt (e.g. in the aforementioned case of *Don Quijote*) since it is part of the aesthetic field where the complex strata of Foucault's episteme are more likely to reveal themselves than in others. With the emergence of the concept of representation, literature figures as a gesture which deliberately questions the process of knowledge production. This can be seen in Foucault's discussion of the extraordinary receptivity of the poet, whom he regards as more sensitive to 'the other language', the language that manifests a partial glimpse of the underlying episteme:

> [The poet's function] is the *allegorical* role; beneath the language of signs and beneath the interplay of their precisely delineated distinctions, he strains his ears to catch that 'other language', the language, without words or discourse, of

> resemblance. [The poet resides] on the outer edge of our culture and at the point nearest to its essential divisions, that 'frontier' situation [...].[83]

Literature, for Foucault, is a product which can reveal an interesting, albeit only partial, structure of the episteme and thereby becomes more liable to register epistemic change.[84] This attitude towards literature is made possible by Foucault's highly romantic view of the writer who lives on the edge of society and whose sense of romantic individualism allows him or her to be sensitive enough to catch a glimpse of the underlying episteme, the strata of which remain forbidden to the rest of society. This resembles Calvino's view of the author in 'Usi politici giusti e sbagliati della letteratura', in which he perceives that the role of literature is to give a voice to those that have been excluded.[85] Calvino's concept of literature is in line with Foucault's notion of the writer as a perceptive person living on the edge of society. For Calvino:

> Allo scrittore, proprio per l'individualismo solitario del suo lavoro, può accadere d'esplorare zone che nessuno ha esplorato prima, dentro di sé o fuori; di fare scoperte che prima o poi risulteranno campi essenziali per la consapevolezza collettiva.[86]

For both Foucault and Calvino, the writer is in the ideal position to have distinctive insight into social mechanisms since he or she leads a marginal life. This leads to different yet related consequences for both writers. For Calvino,

---

[83] Foucault, *The Order of Things*, pp. 49-50. His italics.

[84] For more details, see Simon During, *Foucault and Literature: Towards a Genealogy of Writing* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 113-18.

[85] 'La letteratura è necessaria alla politica prima di tutto quando essa dà voce a ciò che è senza voce, quando dà un nome a ciò che non ha ancora un nome, e specialmente a ciò che il linguaggio politico esclude o cerca d'escludere' (Calvino, 'Usi politici giusti e sbagliati della letteratura'; in his *Saggi 1945-1985*, i, 351-60 (p. 358). The essay was first presented in English at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst in 1976).

[86] Calvino, 'Usi politici giusti e sbagliati della letteratura', p. 359.

such individualism enables the writer to capture ideas that are excluded or those that people normally take for granted, whereas, for Foucault, this state of isolation leads to the writer's perceptive recognition of epistemic change.

On another level, literature also plays an important role in the crisis of representation in Foucault's modern age, with language being seen as a complex medium worthy of autonomous investigation. Literature becomes a productive field in which language and representation are explored in their complexity. If literature in the classical age was mainly affiliated to the explanation of represented ideas, in the modern age it becomes more preoccupied with its own medium, i.e. language:

> there is nothing for [literature] to do but to curve back in a perpetual return upon itself, as if its discourse could have no other content than the expression of its own form; it addresses itself to itself as a writing subjectivity, or seeks to re-apprehend the essence of all literature in the movement that brought it into being; and thus all its threads converge upon the finest of points — singular, instanteneous, and yet absolutely universal — upon the simple act of writing.[87]

According to Foucault, the advent of the modern episteme means that literature becomes more concerned with its own representation. With its transgressive character and receptiveness to epistemic shift, it is logical that, for Foucault, one of the key roles of literature should be an exploration of the intervention of human beings in representational practices. In this aspect, literature is to carry out a paradoxical task: to represent the unpresentable, to represent the human condition which brings about the constraints of representation. Foucault then

[87] Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 300.

wishes to focus on 'the intransitivity of literature', a strategy which he believes can break with a myth of literature as an expressive model:

> it has been very important to establish the great principle that literature is concerned only with itself. If it has anything to do with its author, it's according to a mode of death, silence, and the very disappearance of the one who writes.[88]

For him, this self-referential task of literature is to subvert a teleological view of literature, 'to get rid of the idea that literature was the place of all transits, or the point where all transits ended up the expression of totalities'.[89] The abolition of such a view is to support the idea that the meaning of literature lies in its own existence, its analysis of the borders of representation, its negotiations between the realms of the presentable and the unpresentable due to the finitude of man.

Like Foucault, Lyotard also argues that narrative increasingly finds itself engaged with the means rather than the content as this shift is in line with the repositioning of the human in representational practices. For Lyotard:

> the emphasis can be placed on the powerlessness of the faculty of presentation, on the nostalgia for presence felt by the human subject, on the obscure and futile will which inhabits him in spite of everything.[90]

In other words, literature should explore his idea of the conflict between the powers of conceptual reason and the impotency of representation to gauge the depths that those powers can reach. Like Foucault, Lyotard perceives that literature is committed to the task of exploring the dual role of man as man

---

[88] Foucault, 'On Literature', trans. by John Johnston, in *Foucault Live: Collected Interviews, 1961-1984*, ed. by Sylvère Lotringer (New York: Semiotext(e), 1996), pp. 150-53 (p. 151).
[89] Foucault, 'On Literature', p. 151.
[90] Lyotard, 'Answering the Question: What Is Postmodernism?', p. 79.

becomes both the subject and the object of representation. Adopting this standpoint, Lyotard goes on to develop his own distinction between literary modernism and postmodernism.[91] For him, even though the unpresentable is recognised and portrayed as a missing jigsaw piece in modernist literature, '[its] form, because of its recognisable consistency, continues to offer to the reader or viewer matter for solace and pleasure'.[92] Postmodern literature, by contrast, sets out to explore the unpresentable and searches for new ways to tackle it, with a view to reinforcing the sense of the unpresentable:

> The postmodern would be that which, in the modern, puts forward the unpresentable in presentation itself; that which denies itself the solace of good forms, the consensus of a taste which would make it possible to share collectively the nostalgia for the unattainable; that which searches for new presentations, not in order to enjoy them but in order to impart a stronger sense of the unpresentable.[93]

For Lyotard, these ideas point towards an essential difference in terms of attitudes: while modernist literature is distinguished by a predominant view of the unified universe, as evidenced in its 'solace of good forms', for most postmodern writers such a world-view is no longer tenable as the crisis of representation renders the universe unrepresentable in its absolute form.

---

[91] For more details on modernist literature, see Malcolm Bradbury, and James McFarlane, eds, *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature 1890-1930* (London: Penguin, 1991; first publ. 1976); Michael Bell, ed., *The Context of English Literature: 1900-1930* (London: Methuen, 1980); Ricardo J. Quinones, *Mapping Literary Modernism: Time and Development* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985); Peter Nicholls, *Modernisms: A Literary Guide* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1995); Randall Stevenson, *Modernist Fiction: An Introduction*, rev edn (Harlow: Prentice Hall, 1998; first publ. 1992); Peter Childs, *Modernism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000). For more details on postmodern literature, see Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1987); Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988); Brian McHale, *Constructing Postmodernism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992); Stephen Baker, *The Fiction of Postmodernity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000).

[92] Lyotard, 'Answering the Question: What Is Postmodernism?', p. 81.

[93] Lyotard, 'Answering the Question: What Is Postmodernism?', p. 81.

According to Lyotard, this leads to a feeling of nostalgia for lost meaning, for human inability to represent the sublime, and a proclivity to revel in 'the invention of new rules of the game'.[94]

To an extent, Lyotard's theoretical directions are in line with Alan Wilde's modernism/postmodernism distinction. Wilde agrees with Lyotard that the distance between reality and representation is already recognised in modernist literature and that one of the main differences between literary modernism and postmodernism lies in their treatments of this awareness. However, while Lyotard claims that modernist literature tends to give the impression of the unified universe via such stylistic devices as form and consistency and refuses to give the crisis of representation its due emphasis, Wilde argues that the crisis equally plagues the modernist world-view and that the constant use of these stylistic gestures in modernist literature in a way hints at the incapacity of modernist writers to narrow the gap between their own selves and the external world:

> That the modernists yearn at the same time to overcome their detachment, their aesthetically determined and determining view of life, that they long to bridge the gap they themselves originate between the hovering self and the distant world, simply demonstrates, within its own terms, the insolubility of the problem [...].[95]

For Wilde, this state of insolubility is linked to 'an anxiety to recuperate a lost wholeness'[96] that prevails in literary modernism. It is from this negative premise that Wilde constructs his line of postmodernism. Like Lyotard, he believes that

---

[94] Lyotard, 'Answering the Question: What Is Postmodernism?', p. 80.
[95] Alan Wilde, *Horizons of Assent: Modernism, Postmodernism, and the Ironic Imagination* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), p. 128.
[96] Wilde, *Horizons of Assent*, p. 131.

the issues of representation and representability become a common, if not banal, topic that postmodern literature needs to confront. Yet, unlike modernist literature, postmodern literature, according to Wilde, should be defined on the basis that it shows a tendency to accept the crisis of representation and the constraints of the human condition as *données* and to find new, refreshing ways to reflect these issues in a more positive, accepting light. Following this line, he argues that postmodern literature can be distinguished by its proclivity to play upon, rather than deplore, the loss of absolutes:

> unlovingly creative, transforming paradox from the sign of crisis to a cause for play (while creating, all unwittingly, paradoxes of their own), discarding and scorning the modernists' urgent desire to recover an original wholeness but nevertheless imposing on unpatterned reality the squamousness of the abstracting mind, [postmodern writings] are modernism's lineal descendents (or perhaps its illegitimate sons), patricides manqués.[97]

While Lyotard chooses to define postmodern literature by its tendency to explore and highlight the crisis of representation, Wilde not only emphasises that postmodern literature signals a continuation of the meditations upon the crisis that have already commenced in modernist literature, but also that it is a positive step forward which is both accepting and celebratory.

For Lyotard and Wilde, despite the discrepancies in their theoretical positions, modernist and postmodern literature agree on one point: absolute reality can no longer be attained since the crisis of representation only allows the author to use the conceivable to refer to the unpresentable. In this light, it can be argued that, like Foucault, both Lyotard and Wilde foreground the importance of the

---

[97] Wilde, *Horizons of Assent*, p. 144.

representability of literature, i.e. that literature is used as a representative ground, even though, paradoxically, this representative quality will be employed as an instrument to explore itself. For these theorists, one of the main tasks of literature is to explore the self-reflexive issue of representation, itself providing a foundation upon which the existence of literature is established.

From Context to Text: The Cases of Borges and Calvino

The ideas of human intrusion and its consequences in representational practices as proposed by Derrida, Foucault, Lyotard, and Wilde can be seen as cultural indicators reflecting the preoccupations and anxieties deeply felt by scholars and thinkers in the twentieth century. This thesis will follow the routes paved by these theorists by analysing how interventions of the human condition and their implications are discussed in the narratives of Borges and Calvino, as well as how these truths are revivified by their imaginative fictions. In their own ways, both writers call for a renewed need to challenge a traditional view of representation (i.e. Foucault's classical episteme) and place emphasis on the human factor at the centre. The title 'Representing the Human Condition' is intentionally ambiguous. What concerns this thesis is not only how the issue of the human condition intervenes in the representational process in the narratives of Borges and Calvino; how the human condition and its limits are represented is also a matter of equal importance.

The structure of this thesis reflects how both authors explore the human condition and its representational limits in diverse yet interconnected aspects. Chapter One begins by deploying language as the central theme. This is apt not only because language is one of the fundamental modes of representation, but also because it is the site at which the problematisation of representation occurs. In other words, the limits of the human condition in narrative reveal themselves

at the level of language. This chapter involves a discussion of how the real cannot be reached through language and how this affects notions of authorship, readership, and text. This chapter also introduces basic issues of language and textuality which are central to representation and thereby paves the way for subsequent chapters.

While Chapter One discusses how language constructs and mediates representational practices, framing our experience of reality, Chapter Two explores further the limits of the human condition by analysing the cognitive processes of knowledge conceptualisation to which human beings are subjected. It aims to discuss how the narratives of Borges and Calvino respond to such basic issues as reductionism, identity, objectivity, and causality, which are the main elements at work in knowledge conceptualisation. The discussion is intended to show how the constraints of these concepts fundamentally constitute the limits of the human condition. The second half of the chapter features an analysis of the emergence of chance in the narratives of both authors, especially its role in destabilising the knowledge conceptualising process.

The main focus of Chapter Three is the issue of hermeneutic inquiry. While the previous two chapters explore what Borges and Calvino mean by the human condition, this chapter describes the nature of the human pursuit of the real in the wake of all the constraints. It examines how Borges and Calvino treat the theme of the search when searching is seen as futile in essence. Following the discussion of the futility of humankind's continuing inquiry, Chapter Four discusses how the crisis of representation and the search for absolute reality is made manifest in the use of space in the narratives of both authors. The analysis aims to explore their use of space as a figurative area of the unrepresentable whence their characters need to escape. The labyrinth looms large in this chapter, as its topography epitomises an intricate, sinuous construction of reality seducing

humankind to explore its passages and lose its way. The notion of cartography is also considered, especially as a metaphor for the doomed attempt of human beings to make sense of complex spaces.

Chapter Five explores Borges's and Calvino's attempts to show how human beings soldier on by deploying the concept of games. While Chapter Four shows how the human condition and its constraints imprison mankind in imaginary spaces, Chapter Five aims to analyse how such imprisonment is tolerated as it is part of the human condition. The concept of games shows how such incarceration is made tolerable, and perhaps even enjoyable, in the narratives of Borges and Calvino. The Conclusion aims to trace the similarities and differences in how both authors deal with the themes which have been previously sketched out. By pursuing the modern/postmodern debate triggered by Lyotard and Wilde as a framework, it aims to show how they are similar in terms of constantly searching for new ways to explore the human condition, as well as to discuss the fundamental difference in attitudes of the two authors.

This thesis is, of course, subject to certain limitations. These are, in the main, derived from the fact that the two authors' works are juxtaposed, not in the light of when they were written, but in regard to the comparability of motifs in their stories. The thesis does not intend to analyse the works of Borges and Calvino in chronological order and it aims to discuss the development of their reflections on representation and the human condition during their literary careers only to the extent that it matters within a larger comparative framework. This is due to limits of space as well as the focus of the thesis, which aims rather to compare the works of the two authors and to explore the difference in their attitudes through the juxtaposition of their stories, regardless of the time when they were written. However, this atemporality will be partially redressed in the conclusion, in which the comparison is contextualised in relation to modern/postmodern

debates. It will aim to show how their attitudes are grounded in different historical moments as marked by the transition from modernism to postmodernism.

Chapter 1

Fictional Language and the World of Textuality

In the introduction, we saw how the concept of representation evolved and how the intervention of the so-called human condition highlights the limits of representation. Language plays a central role in these issues as it is one of the most important means that human beings use in representational processes. The narratives of Borges and Calvino also touch upon the issue of language in many aspects and it is acknowledged that neither of them take this significant issue for granted.[1] In the case of Borges, literary work becomes a craft, a lapidary activity, absorbing immense time and energy. Borges's own styles changed and developed through his literary career and this shows his strong sense of self-criticism. For instance, he rejected some of his early works on the ground that they denote a tendency towards an excessive search for local colour through linguistic elements.[2] One of his statements in an interview clearly shows how sensitive he was to language and how self-critical and self-effacing he could be. When asked to give advice to young, inexperienced writers, Borges urged them to think carefully about language:

---

[1] There are several essays on the poetics of the narratives of both Borges and Calvino. For Borges, see Arturo Echavarría Ferrari, *Lengua y literatura de Borges* (Barcelona: Ariel, 1983);Estela Célado Veiga, 'Forma e significato nei racconti di Jorge Luis Borges', trans. by Alfonsina Ramagini Bacci, in *La pratica sociale del testo*, ed. by Carlo Bordoni (Bologna: CLUEB, 1985), pp. 31-45. For Calvino, see Gabriele Tommasina, *Italo Calvino: Eros and Language* (London and Toronto: Associated University Press, 1994); Luigi Montella, *Italo Calvino: il percorso dei linguaggi* (Salerno: Edisud, 1996); Gian Luigi Beccaria, 'Calvino, il mestiere di scrivere', in *Italo Calvino: A Writer for the Next Millennium*, pp. 151-67; Vittorio Coletti, 'Calvino e l'italiano 'concreto' e 'preciso'', in *Italo Calvino: la letteratura, la scienza, la città*, pp. 36-43.

[2] These works are *Luna de enfrente* (1925) and *Evaristo Carriego* (1930). See also Ana María Barrenechea, 'Borges y el idioma de los argentinos', in her *La expresión de la irrealidad en la obra de Borges* (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 1967), pp. 205-29 (p. 220). Stylistics is probably also a main motive that led Borges to suppress his three main early works, *Inquisiciones* (1925), *El tamaño de mi esperanza* (1926), and *El idioma de los argentinos* (1928), in the compilation of his *Obras completas* by Emecé. See also Víctor Farías, *Las actas secretas:* Inquisiciones *y* El idioma de los argentinos, *los otros libros proscritos de Jorge Luis Borges* (Madrid: Anaya & Mario Muchnik, 1994).

> [...] yo le aconsejaría más bien la pobreza de vocabulario que exceso de riqueza. Hay un defecto moral que suele advertirse en la obra, y ese defecto es la vanidad. [...] Cuando las cosas están muy bien hechas parecen no sólo fáciles sino inevitables. [...] Una vez terminado un trabajo, debe parecer espontáneo, aunque se vea que está lleno de secretas astucias y modestas destrezas, pero no de destrezas vanidosas.[3]

Like Borges, Calvino was also preoccupied with language. Mainly renowned for his novels and short stories, Calvino maintained that writing prose was a task no less demanding than verse in terms of stylistics since the author is also subject to a process of linguistic selection and composition. In an interview with Maria Corti, he claims:

> Credo che la prosa richieda un investimento di tutte le proprie risorse verbali, tal quale come la poesia: scatto e precisione nella scelta dei vocaboli, economia e pregnanza e inventiva nella loro distribuzione e strategia, slancio e mobilità e tensione nella frase, agilità e duttilità nello spostarsi da un registro all'altro, da un ritmo all'altro.[4]

For both authors, language becomes one of their main concerns. Language not only presents itself as a topic that both authors frequently talk about in interviews, but is also a theme to which they constantly refer in both their stories and essays.[5] A collection of Borges's essays, for instance, is named *El idioma de los argentinos* and several essays in this volume alone reflect his preoccupation

---

[3] Rita Guibert, 'Borges habla de Borges', in *Jorge Luis Borges*, ed. by Jaime Alazraki (Madrid: Taurus, 1976), pp. 318-55 (p. 349) (first publ. 1968).
[4] Calvino, 'Intervista di Maria Corti', in his *Saggi 1945-1985*, ii, 2920-29 (pp. 2922-23).
[5] In Borges's case, one critic even maintains that the fact that Borges is preoccupied with language must rank as 'one of the greatest commonplaces of criticism' (Peter Standish, 'Borges and the Limits of Language', *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispanicos*, 16 (1991), pp. 136-42 (p. 136)).

with language.[6] Calvino also published a great number of essays on language during his lifetime and posthumously. *Una pietra sopra*,[7] which was first published in 1980, is a collection of his essays that mainly deal with the themes of literature and society. Several essays in this collection directly treat language as a major theme.[8] In *Lezioni americane*, when he needs to define what he means by exactitude, he lists three separate answers, the last of which directly involves language: 'un linguaggio il più preciso possibile come lessico e come resa delle sfumature del pensiero e dell'immaginazione [...]'.[9]

These examples reflect how both Borges and Calvino recognised the important role that language plays in the processes of literary construction. This will be the central issue of this chapter, which aims to focus on the impact of language on the conceptualisation of reality in their narratives by exploring three main areas, i.e. how reality is perceived as too complex to be rendered by language; how language is treacherous; and how textualisation plays a key role in constructing reality. The discussion of these three significant areas will lead to an analysis of how, by adopting Roland Barthes's theory, the concept of 'work' is replaced by that of 'text' in the narratives of both authors and how this conceptual shift affects the notions of authorship, readership, and translation. The chapter will then move on to discuss how both authors deal with the recognition of such representational limits, whilst focusing on the comparison of their attitudes.

---

[6] These essays include 'Indagación de la palabra', 'Otra vez la metáfora', and 'El idioma de los argentinos'. See Borges, *El idioma de los argentinos* (Buenos Aires: Gleizer, 1928).

[7] For more details on the discussion of the title and the essays included in this volume, see Angela M. Jeannet, 'A Writer's Project: Cornerstones, Milestones, and Headstones', in *Calvino Revisited*, pp. 207-25.

[8] These include 'L'italiano, una lingua tra le altre lingue', 'L'antilingua', 'Le parolacce', and 'Note sul linguaggio politico'.

[9] Calvino, *Lezione americane*, p. 677.

Reality against Representation: The Variety and Complexity of Reality

Before the authors' reflections upon the characteristics of language are analysed, it is worth looking into what they refer to as 'reality'. Both Borges and Calvino take issue with the problematised relationship between language and reality.[10] Like Foucault's definition of the modern episteme, they believe that reality cannot be wholly represented in language since the concept of reality is too diverse and complex. One of Borges's stories that bespeaks his belief in the conflict between representation and reality is 'El congreso',[11] in which the narrator, Alexander Ferri, relates the experience of his participation in a secret freemasonry, named the Congress, whose chief aim is to represent the humanity of the world. The choice of members of the society poses an inevitable problem of identity and representation:

> [...] don Alejandro Glencoe podía representar a los hacendados, pero también a los orientales y también a los grandes precursores y también a los hombres de barba roja y a los que están sentados en un sillón. Nora Erfjord era noruega. ¿Representaría a las secretarias, a las noruegas o simplemente a todas las mujeres hermosas?[12]

Representation is here regarded as simplifying the essence of human beings, bringing into relief only those aspects that are predominant. However, since human beings are deeply complex and can be viewed as possessing many different aspects at the same time, a representational act is bound to face the danger of reductionism.

---

[10] In Borges's case, see also Robert Scholes, 'The Reality of Borges', in *Critical Essays on Jorge Luis Borges*, ed. by Jaime Alazraki (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1987), pp. 130-39 (first publ. 1979).
[11] Borges, 'El congreso', in his *El libro de arena* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1975), pp. 33-63.
[12] Borges, 'El congreso', pp. 44-45.

The issue of representation becomes more complicated when the committee of the Congress decides to establish a library of representative books. The question as to which books should represent the world is no less complicated than the choice of the committee of the Congress. At the beginning, only atlases, encyclopaedias, and a limited number of reference books are chosen. Then they agree that only reference books are not enough to represent the world; they start to purchase the classics of all countries. Then the choice of books becomes increasingly arbitrary and absurd:

> Twirl [...] había propuesto la compra indiscriminada de colecciones de *La Prensa*, de tres mil cuatrocientos ejemplares de *Don Quijote*, en diversos formatos, del epistolario de Balmes, de tesis universitarias, de cuentas, de boletines y de programas de teatro.[13]

The narrative, therefore, questions the idea of representation itself and how much reality can be represented through these arbitrary choices. Like language, representation filters and distorts the idea of reality because much of the essence of the real lies in its multiplicity, the variety that far exceeds any attempt to represent it. The ending sees the chairman of the Congress, Don Alejandro Glencoe, setting fire to all the books that the Congress has purchased. He delivers an explanatory message while the fire is burning piles of books:

> La empresa que hemos acometido es tan vasta que abarca – ahora lo sé – el mundo entero. No es unos cuantos charlatanes que aturden en los galpones de una estancia perdida. [Don Alejandro is here referring to the gathering of the

[13] Borges, 'El congreso', p. 57. His italics.

> Congress itself.] El Congreso del Mundo comenzó con el primer instante del mundo y proseguirá cuando seamos polvo. No hay un lugar en que no esté.[14]

In other words, every act that happens is part of the Congress of the World. It is of no use that the committee tries to establish a library that represents the world because it will become one more thing added to the world. Implicit in this tale is Borges's definition of reality that is set against any attempt to reduce reality to representation. The essence of the real, in other words, lies in its variety and its irreducibility.

While the boundaries of reality, for Borges, are vast and almost indefinable, Calvino's definition of reality relies on his distinction between written and unwritten worlds. The written world is comprised of written words[15] and its reality differs from that of the unwritten world.[16] While acknowledging the relationship between the two worlds, Calvino warns against using the experience of the unwritten world as a yardstick against that of the written since the basic parameters of the two worlds are by no means the same. The reality of the unwritten world is far more complex and exceeds the limits of language:

> il mondo esterno è sempre là e non dipende dalle parole, anzi è in qualche modo irriducibile alle parole, e non c'è linguaggio, non c'è scrittura che possano esaurirlo. Mi basta voltare le spalle alle parole depositate nei libri, tuffarmi nel

---

[14] Borges, 'El congreso', p. 60.

[15] Calvino defines the written world as 'un mondo fatto di parole, usate secondo le tecniche e le strategie proprie del linguaggio, secondo gli speciali sistemi in cui s'organizzano i significati e le relazioni tra significati' (Calvino, 'Mondo scritto e mondo non scritto', *Saggi 1945-1985*, ii, 1865-75 (p. 1868)).

[16] Calvino analyses the reality of the written world in terms of 'levels': 'la letterature non conosce *la* realtà ma solo *livelli*' (Calvino, 'I livelli della realtà in letteratura', *Saggi 1945-1985*, i, 380-98 (p. 398). His italics).

> mondo di fuori, sperando di raggiungere il cuore del silenzio, il vero silenzio pieno di significato...[17]

The core of the unwritten world is represented by silence since its reality exceeds linguistic boundaries and thus cannot be verbally represented.

One of the dialogues between the Khan and Marco Polo in *Le città invisibili*,[18] Calvino's work that features Polo's recounting of his experience in each of the Khan's cities, clearly affirms his notion that there is an essential disjunction between 'linguistic' and 'non-linguistic' realities. Before Polo learns the language of the Emperor, he manages to rely on gestures and objects he has found in foreign places to relate his adventures. However, this type of communication has a drawback since one gesture or one object can mean many things and their combination can generate an even vaster sequence of meaning:

> un turcasso pieno di frecce indicava ora l'approssimarsi d'una guerra, ora abbondanza di cacciagione, oppure la bottega d'un armaiolo; una clessidra poteva significare il tempo che passa o che è passato, oppure la sabbia, o un'officina in cui si fabbricano clessidre.[19]

In other words, by using gestures and objects instead of words, meaning is opened up and ambiguities abound. Nonetheless, when Polo learns the Khan's language and uses it as a means to communicate his thoughts, he reckons that some aspects of his adventures are better rendered with the aid of gestures and exotic objects:

---

[17] Calvino, 'Mondo scritto e mondo non scritto', pp. 1868-69.
[18] Calvino, *Le città invisibili*, in his *Romanzi e racconti*, ii, 357-498 (first publ. 1972).
[19] Calvino, *Le città invisibili*, p. 386.

> Ma si sarebbe detto che la comunicazione fra loro fosse meno felice d'una volta: certo le parole servivano meglio degli oggetti e dei gesti per elencare le cose più importanti d'ogni provincia e città: monumenti, mercati, costumi, fauna e flora; tuttavia quando Polo cominciava a dire di come doveva essere la vita in quei luoghi, giorno per giorno, sera dopo sera, le parole gli venivano meno, e a poco a poco tornava a ricorrere a gesti, a smorfie, a occhiate.[20]

According to Polo, gestures, grimaces, and glances can convey private experience that he has gained from his adventures better than words. This is because such experience is part of Calvino's unwritten world and, therefore, cannot be wholly represented by verbal language. Gestures and objects, in this case, can better convey what Polo thinks because, in opening up meaning, they reflect the irreducibly complex nature of life.

Notwithstanding, the gestures and the objects that they use begin to represent certain fixed ideas; they gradually begin to take the role of words in signifying certain ideas that both users agree on. What Polo originally wants to convey, which is part of Calvino's unwritten world, is transformed into fixed ideas and this shift essentially contradicts their nature. Perceiving this, the Khan and Polo use gestures and objects less and less. Their conversations tend to end up in silence and immobility. However, this communicative void is never empty; it represents the multiplicity of the real *par excellence* since it directly refers to Calvino's unwritten world, the realm which cannot be subject to a process of signification. Like Don Alejandro in Borges's 'El congreso', Polo and the Khan recognise the gap between reality and representation, acknowledging that reality is in fact far more complex than can be presented through language.

---

[20] Calvino, *Le città invisibili*, pp. 386-87.

The Treachery of Words: How Language Betrays Reality

The conflict between reality and representation is not the only snag that troubles representational practices. The fact that language represents reality in a symbolic way also further problematises these practices. In an interview, Borges fosters an analogy between words and coins: 'the chief dilemma of a literary life is to know that words are merely coins, that words mean nothing',[21] thereby acknowledging that words are mainly used for communicative purposes and, like coins, their value lies in their symbolic meaning, which is primarily derived from their relationships within the whole.[22] However, even though Borges accepts that words do not have any value attached to their appearance, he believes that words are still influential and somehow carry a mysterious status:

> At first I must have thought of language as a means of communication, but my father's intoning those verses and my hearing them – accepting them but not understanding them, perhaps – made me find out that language could also weave a spell, that language was a kind of witchcraft.[23]

---

[21] Borges, 'Simply a Man of Letters', in *Simply a Man of Letters: Panel Discussions and Papers from the Proceedings of a Symposium on Jorge Luis Borges at the University of Maine at Orono*, ed. by Carlos Cortinez (Orono, Maine: University of Maine at Orono Press, 1982), pp. 1-24 (p. 12).

[22] In this aspect, their reflections on language bear striking resemblace to the linguistic theory of Ferdinand de Saussure (see his *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. by W. Baskin (Glasgow: Fontana, 1974)). For this reason, several scholars attempt to associate the narratives of Borges with Saussure's theory and, by proxy, structuralism. David William Foster, for example, analyses Borges's in the light of structuralism in his 'Borges and Structuralism: Toward an Implied Poetics', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 19 (1973), 341-51. Foster's analysis, however, aims to explore what Borges's poetics *implies* since there has not been any suggestion that Borges had ever mentioned Saussure in his work. See also Echavarría Ferrari, *Lengua y literatura de Borges*, esp. pp. 100-4. Calvino's debt to Saussure's theory of language is more visible. He directly mentions Saussure a few times in his essays, one of which is in his review of Claude Lévi-Strauss's book. See Calvino, 'Lo sguardo da lontano', in his *Saggi 1945-1985*, ii, 2067-76 (first publ. 1983).

[23] Borges, 'Borges on Borges', in *In Memory of Borges*, ed. by Norman Thomas di Giovanni (London: Constable, 1988), pp. 37-51 (p. 40).

For Borges, language is not only used for communicative purposes, it also serves to enchant its users, be they readers or writers. Words are not only a bridge that connects a phonetic sound with an idea, they involve a larger set of connotative constructs, as Borges states:

> I think of words as being symbols: symbols of the many facts of our lives, symbols of emotions, perceptions, feelings, symbols of thought; and all those are mere sounds, mere conventional sounds. And yet there is something more to the sounds.[24]

Language, for him, not only consists of a set of linguistic elements whose main purpose is to facilitate a communicative process, it also functions as an intermediary means which can mystify, rather than convey, reality. Instead of reflecting reality as it is, language can complicate the real by becoming another reality, drawing us further away from the object it wishes to depict.

'Una rosa amarilla',[25] one of the short stories included in *El hacedor*, displays Borges's assumption that language and reality are different entities. In the story, Giambattista Marino[26] realises on the eve of his death that the metaphor that he once devised to describe a rose[27] is not the same thing as the rose itself.[28] The magical appearance of the real rose becomes an epiphany to Marino:

---

[24] Borges, 'Simply a Man of Letters', p. 5.
[25] Borges, 'Una rosa amarilla', in his *Obras completas 1923-1972*, p. 795 (first publ. 1960).
[26] An Italian poet (1569-1625) who led the Baroque movement in the seventeenth century. See also Paolo Cherchi, 'Marino and his Followers', in *The Cambridge History of Italian Literature*, ed. by Peter Brand and Lino Pertile, rev edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 305-8; James V. Mirollo, *The Poet of the Marvellous: Giambattista Marino* (New York and London: Columbia University, 1963).
[27] In the story, Borges gives the translation of an extract from *L'Adone*, one of Marino's poems, which reads: 'Porpora de'giardin, pompa de'prati,/ Gemma di primavera, occhio d'aprile' (Marino, *L'Adone*, in his *Opere*, ed. by Alberto Asor Rosa (Milan: Rizzoli, 1967), pp. 623-793 (p. 652)).
[28] For more details on the rose and its symbolic function, see Emma Susana Speratti-Piñero, 'The Rose in Borges' Work', in *Simply a Man of Letters*, pp. 191-98.

> Marino *vio* la rosa, como Adán pudo verla en el Paraíso, y sintió que ella estaba en su eternidad y no en sus palabras y que podemos mencionar o aludir pero no expresar que los altos y soberbios volúmenes que formaban en un ángulo de la sala una penumbra de oro no eran (como su vanidad soñó) un espejo del mundo, sino una cosa más agregada al mundo.[29]

The rose that Marino attempts to create via poetic language can never be the same as the real rose that he sees before he dies. Since it is made up of language, his metaphor of the rose will not be able to transcribe the actuality of the real rose. The real rose still exists somewhere in the world; his metaphor of the rose will be one more thing that is added to the already multiple world of textuality.

'El otro tigre',[30] a poem which is also included in *El hacedor*, also reflects Borges's notion that the realms of language and reality do not coincide. The poetic persona is in search of a vivid description of a tiger that will evoke realistic effect. The poem is divided into three stanzas with the first showing how carefully he attempts to depict the tiger:

> Entre las rayas del bambú descifro
> Sus rayas y presiento la osatura
> Baja la piel espléndida que vibra.
> En vano se interponen los convexos
> Mares y los desiertos del planeta;
> Desde esta casa de un remoto puerto
> De América del Sur, te sigo y sueño,

---

[29] Borges, 'Una rosa amarilla', p. 795. His italics.
[30] Borges, 'El otro tigre', in his *Obras completas 1923-1972*, pp. 824-25 (first publ. 1960).

Oh tigre de las márgenes del Ganges.[31]

The ending of the first stanza denotes a disjunction between the real tiger and the one he conjures up through his poetic construction: the tiger he endeavours to describe is from another part of the world, one that dwells near the Ganges; therefore, he needs to rely on his imagination to devise this image.

The poetic persona expresses his frustration in the second stanza since it transpires that the tiger he claims to conjure up in the first stanza will never be the same as the real one. His tiger is constructed from signs and linguistic effects that come from memory and dream. His tiger will not be 'el tigre vertebrado' but 'ficción del arte':

Cunde la tarde en mi alma y reflexiono
Que el tigre vocativo de mi verso
Es un tigre de símbolos y sombras,
Una serie de tropos literarios
Y de memorias de la enciclopedia
Y no el tigre fatal [...][32]

The difference between the two tigers, the real and the textual, is rendered more acute in this second stanza. The desire to depict a real one leads the persona to his frustrated attempt to pin down a real tiger in historical circumstances:

El verdadero, el de caliente sangre,
El que diezma la tribu de los búfalos

---

[31] Borges, 'El otro tigre', p. 824.
[32] Borges, 'El otro tigre', p. 824.

Y hoy, 3 de agosto del 59,
Alarga en la pradera una pausada
Sombra [...][33]

The third stanza, however, ends with a feeling of acceptance. Even though the tiger image that he attempts to conjure up textually cannot become a real flesh-and-blood one, his search will continue. He attributes the desire to continue this pursuit to a drive which cannot be accounted for by reason, a drive which is 'insensata y antigua'.[34] The conclusion that the poetic persona achieves at the end of the poem is that the other tiger that he is in search of is not the one that is in the poem. Like the rose that Marino sees before his death that he cannot put into words, the tiger is closer to reality when it is not textualised. An act of naming or describing things in words, for Borges, unwittingly deprives described objects of their richness:

[...] pero ya el hecho de nombrarlo
Y de conjeturar su circunstancia
Lo hace ficción del arte y no criatura
Viviente de las que andan por la tierra.[35]

Language, thus, becomes an obstacle that hinders Borges from approaching the real. However, Borges does not claim that the world of reality is superior to that of artistic textuality. Instead, both worlds are equally valid:

---

[33] Borges, 'El otro tigre', pp. 824-25.
[34] Borges, 'El otro tigre', p. 825.
[35] Borges, 'El otro tigre', p. 825. It should also be noted here that the tiger can also represent Borges's desire to be a man of action. For more details, see Paul Cheselka, *The Poetry and Poetics of Jorge Luis Borges* (New York: Peter Lang, 1987), pp. 165-66.

> [...] though things may be unobtainable, though we shall never find the yellow rose or the other tiger, we are making structures of words, of symbols, of metaphors, of adjectives, of images, and those things exist, and that world is not the world of the rose and the tiger but the world of art, which may be as praiseworthy and as real. For all I know, these poems that came out of despair, out of feeling that art is hopeless, that you cannot express things and that you can only allude to them – these poems may also be hope and a token of felicity, since if we cannot ape nature we can still make art. And that might be sufficient for man, for any man, for a lifetime.[36]

Like Borges, Calvino is also conscious of the disparity between the textual and the empirical worlds. In a similar way, he expresses his desire to search for a way to construct an image that can transcend the boundaries of both worlds, even though the possibility of such an act is limited. As Borges contemplates in 'Una rosa amarilla' and 'El otro tigre', Calvino considers language to be an intermediate agent that, apart from reducing the multiplicity and richness of the real, becomes one more thing added to the universe. Calvino also believes that language produces psychological effects on its users. His depiction of 'Clarice' in *Le città invisibili* testifies to this belief. The narrator charts a history of the city, which has experienced its ups and downs, in the first part of the story. The city has changed so much that its location and its name are the only two elements that stay the same. However, it is the city's name that comes back to haunt the city:

> [...] più la nuova città s'insediava trionfalmente nel luogo e nel nome della prima Clarice, più s'accorgeva d'allontanarsi da quella, di distruggerla non meno

---

[36] Willis Barnstone, *Borges at Eighty: Conversations* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), p. 59.

> rapidamente dei topi e della muffa: nonostante l'orgoglio del nuovo fasto, in fondo al cuore si sentiva estranea, incongrua, usurpatrice.[37]

The further the city has developed, the more its inhabitants become alienated. This is because the name with which people refer to this city still represents the splendour of the first Clarice, the city that has long disappeared. The traces of the city's first splendour do not serve any practical use and, therefore, are preserved in display cases so that people can reconstruct their own images of the first Clarice. The name 'Clarice' still creates an effect that resembles a spell, reminding the listener or the reader of the lost splendour that the city once had; it always points nostalgically towards the city's glorious past, no matter how prosperous the city is in its present state.

A similar idea is also illustrated in his description of 'Pirra', another imagined city in *Le città invisibili*. Before the narrator travels to the city, he has conjured up several attributes that he thinks the city should have and associated these features with the name Pirra itself. Nonetheless, once the narrator sees the city, his first experience of the city is immediately connected to the city's name and his imagined characteristics are all forgotten:

> Appena vi misi piede tutto quello che immaginavo era dimenticato; Pirra era diventata ciò che è Pirra; e io credevo d'aver sempre saputo che il mare non è in vista della città, nascosto da una duna della costa bassa e ondulata [...] Da quel momento in poi il nome Pirra richiama alla mia mente questa vista, questa luce, questo ronzio, quest'aria in cui vola una polvere giallina: è evidente che significa e non poteva significare altro che questo.[38]

---

[37] Calvino, *Le città invisibili*, p. 451.
[38] Calvino, *Le città invisibili*, p. 437.

For Calvino, the association of the characteristics of a city with a name is interesting in the sense that, as his description of Pirra shows, the city's name will evoke certain memories in the traveller and these memories depend on the traveller's first experience of the city. The name of the city will therefore represent the traveller's limited experience of the city. While in 'Una rosa amarilla' Borges considers the word 'rosa' to be insufficient in its representative quality since it cannot replace the rose that Marino once saw, Calvino regards the naming of the city as a deceptive act which tricks the traveller into thinking that the city remains the same. This leads Calvino to the idea that perhaps the city should not be named at all:

> Anche la città alta sul golfo è sempre là, con la piazza chiusa intorno al pozzo, ma non posso più chiamarla con un nome, né ricordare come potevo darle un nome che significa tutt'altro.[39]

Not without irony, Calvino reaches the extreme conclusion that since language betrays reality in the sense that it cannot reflect the mutative aspect of the real, language should not be used.

The Textualisation of Reality: Language and Intermediacy

If the real is far too complex to be fully represented and language is also treacherous in the sense that, while depicting an object, it becomes another object in its own right, the process of textualising reality is indeed a complicated one. In communicating the real to the reader or to the listener, language, no matter how transparent it may seem, always filters and interprets. The role of

---

[39] Calvino, *Le città invisibili*, p. 437.

language in communicating the real is exemplified in one of Borges's stories, 'Funes, el memorioso',[40] in which an eponymous Uruguayan is portrayed as having extraordinary powers of memory. After an accident, Funes is confined to his bed and starts to embark on a mental journey to explore the world in its minutiae.[41] Despite his immobilised state, his perception is acute. The narrator, who bears the same name as the author, describes how sometimes Funes imagines or 'reconstructs' a whole day in his mind, even though that takes another whole day. The protagonist also recalls their conversations:

> Me dijo: *Más recuerdos tengo yo solo que los que habrán tenido todos los hombres desde que el mundo es mundo.* Y también: *Mis sueños son como la vigilia de ustedes.* Y también, hacia el alba: *Mi memoria, señor, es como vaciadero de basuras.*[42]

Funes's memory is so effective that it can portray reality almost in full. It 'represents compulsory, total lucidity, ineluctable awareness of everything whatsoever that falls within his area of perception.'[43] However, for Borges, this kind of memory does not serve any useful purpose; it only complicates the real and prevents Funes from thinking. What Funes can do is only to catalogue information and list differences and similarities; he can neither evaluate nor comment on what he remembers. This is because thinking, for Borges, always involves a process of abstraction: 'Pensar es olvidar diferencias, es generalizar,

---

[40] Borges, 'Funes, el memorioso', in *Obras completas 1923-1972*, pp. 485-90 (first publ. 1944).
[41] The motif of an accident which changes a person's life forever resembles what actually happened to Borges. On Christmas Eve of 1938, he went up a staircase and knocked his head against a window. The accident caused him to lie unconscious and the septicaemia that his wound received made him feverish for a few days. Whilst recovering in hospital, Borges was worried: '[...] I wondered whether I could ever write again. I had previously written quite a few poems and dozens of short reviews. I thought that if I tried to write a review now and failed I'd be all through intellectually, but that if I tried something I had never really done before and failed at that it wouldn't be so bad and might even prepare me for the final revelation. I decided I would try to write a story' (Borges, 'An Autobiographical Essay', p. 154).
[42] Borges, 'Funes el memorioso', p. 488. His italics.
[43] D. L. Shaw, *Borges: Ficciones* (Valencia: Grant & Cutler and Tamesis Books, 1976), p. 45.

abstraer'.[44] Funes's incapacity to comprehend geometry is also an interesting point. Instead of geometrical forms, he sees:

> las aborrascadas crines de un potro, [...] una punta de ganado en una cuchilla, [...] el fuego cambiante y [...] la innumerable ceniza, [...] las muchas caras de un muerto en un largo velorio.[45]

The fact that Funes does not see geometrical forms in his reality also substantiates the idea that he cannot think properly because, according to John Sturrock, 'geometry is the ultimate in abstraction'.[46] Funes can only see particulars but he never perceives forms in a reductive manner.

This also applies to language since language is a form of abstraction, a medium that in a sense generalises reality. The word 'tree', for example, ignores differences that trees can have one from another. Funes attempts to create his own system of numeric language and the motive for this ambitious project is that he thinks the words 'treinta y tres orientales'[47] should have only one sign and one word, instead of two signs and three words. Funes then applies this arbitrary system to other numbers:

> En lugar de siete mil trece, decía (por ejemplo) *Máximo Pérez*; en lugar de siete mil catorce, *El Ferrocarril*; otros números eran *Luis Melián Lafinur, Olimar, azufre, los bastos, la ballena, el gas, la caldera, Napoleón, Agustín de Vedia.* En lugar de quinientos, decía *nueve*.[48]

---

[44] Borges, 'Funes el memorioso', p. 490.
[45] Borges, 'Funes el memorioso', p. 489.
[46] John Sturrock, *Paper Tigers: The Ideal Fictions of Jorge Luis Borges* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 110.
[47] 'The thirty-three Uruguayans' are a band of patriots who travelled from Buenos Aires to Montevideo to expel the Spaniards from Uruguay.
[48] Borges, 'Funes el memorioso', p. 489. His italics.

However, the narrator doubts whether Funes's numeric language will prove useful because it lacks a generalising system that enables other people to use it. Even though he tries to persuade Funes that the numeric language that is currently in use has an inherent system that facilitates memory, Funes does not understand or does not want to understand him. Funes's numeric language represents language that lacks system and reflects arbitrariness in its extremes; even though long numbers can be considerably shortened in Funes's project, the user needs to have a similarly total memory.

Funes's project, therefore, represents an attempt to understand the real in its most precise and minutest details. Funes's perception and comprehension of reality is analogous to an ambitious wish to gain access to the real with little recourse to traditional language or other media, whose abstraction naturally tends to reduce the richness and multiplicity of experience. Nevertheless, Funes's project is doomed: either people do not see any significance in his ambition, or they just fail to understand him. The fact that Funes dies of pulmonary congestion while he is young perhaps reflects, symbolically, his being obliged to take in all particular details without any act of generalisation or abstraction. The name, Funes, which is closely linked to 'funesto', meaning 'ill-fated' or 'disastrous', reflects the sad destiny of the young Uruguayan.[49]

Language is thus an indispensable tool in a verbal communicative process; it not only facilitates but mediates a rendition of human experience of reality. Such an act of linguistic filtration is unavoidable since, as Funes's story shows, language, as well as other systems created by humankind, always to a certain degree

---

[49] I strongly agree with Ronald Christ that Borges sometimes invents names which are 'secret mirrors of the character's destiny'. See Christ, *The Narrow Act: Borges' Art of Allusion* (New York: New York University Press, 1969), esp. pp. 183-84.

involves generalisation and abstraction. Calvino also takes issue with textualisation and reality in his story 'Il guidatore notturno',[50] in which there are only three characters, named 'I', 'Y', and 'Z'. 'I' has an argument with 'Y' (his lover) on the telephone, resulting in 'Y' threatening to call 'Z', a rival of 'I'. As the argument is caused by nothing significant, 'I' feels regretful and plans to see 'Y' face-to-face and talk to her properly. Since both 'I' and 'Y' live in different towns, they need to travel on a motorway to see each other. While 'I' is driving, he imagines 'Y' driving in the other lane, coming towards his town to see him. For 'I', at that instant, the only communication that is important to him is reduced to headlights from the opposite side, from a car that he hopes may be driven by 'Y'. He also imagines the car of 'Z' (his rival) following him, rushing to see 'Y' after she has called him on the telephone. Again the identity of 'Z' is reduced in this case to the headlights of a car that follows him in the same lane. In this story, headlights, like words, become signs that symbolise and simplify complex reality. Like abstraction and generalisation that become part of the process of textualisation in 'Funes, el memorioso', reduction plays a key role in this story: the identity of the three characters and the messages they convey are reduced to the movement of three pairs of headlights on the motorway, like linguistic signs which are used to transcribe the real. In addition, Calvino's narrative also regards diacritical difference as another significant factor at work in the textualisation process, since the meaning of the story is not derived from individual pairs of headlights on their own, but from their relationships with one another and within a whole system. Linguistic signs, likewise, operate on the basis of their relative difference from other signs. Like Borges, Calvino realises that perhaps the limits of language in the textualisation process are indispensable. Human communication, without any reduction to signs, would be unimaginable because it would be too chaotic and disorderly:

---

[50] Calvino, 'Il guidatore notturno', in his *Romanzi e racconti*, ii, 336-43 (first publ. 1967).

> È per questo che ho sentito il bisogno, anziché continuare a parlare, di trasformare le cose da dire in un cono di luce lanciato a centoquaranta all'ora, di trasformare me stesso in questo cono di luce che si muove sull'autostrada, perché è certo che un segnale così può essere ricevuto e compreso da lei senza perdersi nel disordine equivoco delle vibrazioni secondarie, così come io per ricevere e comprendere le cose che lei ha da dirmi vorrei che non fossero altro [...] che questo cono di luce che vedo avanzare sull'autostrada a una velocità [...] di centodieci-centoventi.[51]

For Calvino, language is utilised to articulate human experience of things; it gives form to a seemingly chaotic and undifferentiated jumble of ideas. If Borges in 'Funes, el memorioso' argues that language deprives reality of its original richness and complexity by an inherent process of reduction, abstraction, and generalisation, Calvino in 'Il guidatore notturno' recognises the futility of an attempt to preserve the real in its original minutiae since it would be nothing but a meaningless, confusing heap of facts and ideas. However, while both Borges and Calvino agree to recognise the limits of language when it comes to transcribing the real, Calvino believes that such limits should be viewed more positively as the inherent nature of language and textualisation.

From Work to Text: Implications and Consequences

Both 'Funes el memorioso' and 'Il guidatore notturno' reflect the authors' preoccupation with the filtration of reality by language. Acknowledging that reality and language are not the same thing and that language is not transparent in transcribing the real, both Borges and Calvino voice concern over the role of

---

[51] Calvino, 'Il guidatore notturno', p. 340.

language in constructing the real. In other words, they are fully aware that reality and its textual representation are not bound to be compatible. For Borges and Calvino, such incompatibility between reality and its textual representation is related to three main factors: that reality is too complex to be represented by language, that language itself is not transparent, and that the nature of textualisation to a certain degree mediates reality. These three main factors result in the distinct structural levels of reality and representation, one of which can never fully correspond with the other.

Text

The disparity between reality and representation at the level of language can be analysed in the light of Roland Barthes's concepts of 'text' and 'work'. For Barthes, while 'work' refers to a concrete concept of books and writers in the fully materialistic sense, 'text' denotes 'a methodological field [which] is experienced only in an activity, a production'.[52] In the light of Ferdinand de Saussure's distinction between the signified and the signifier, while 'work' focuses on the former,'text' is more concerned with the latter as it focuses on 'the infinite deferral of the signified [...]'.[53] The narratives of Borges and Calvino can then be considered to be related to Barthes's 'text' in this sense as they also take issue with the constant failure of representation to match up with reality.

Nonetheless, while Barthes's concept of 'text' seems to do away with the notions of original presence and primal reality completely,[54] Borges's narrative

---

[52] Roland Barthes, 'From Work to Text', trans. by Josué V. Harari, in *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, ed. by Josué V. Harari (London: Methuen, 1980), pp. 73-81 (pp. 74-75) (first publ. 1971).

[53] Barthes, 'From Work to Text', p. 76.

[54] For Barthes, the text is both plural and decentred, especially in its production of meaning: '[...] like language, [the Text] is structured but decentred, without closure. [...] The Text is plural. This does not mean just that it has several meanings, but rather that it achieves plurality of meaning, an *irreducible* plurality' (Barthes, 'From Work to Text', p. 76. His italics).

constantly draws the reader's attention back to those issues. In one of his stories, 'La busca de Averroes',[55] for instance, his preoccupation with the signified is made manifest. When people ask Abulcasim, one of Averroës's friends, to relate his experience of marvels in China, he doubts whether this can be done because of the limits of language:

> [...] le exigían maravillas y la maravilla es acaso incomunicable: la luna de Bengala no es igual a la luna del Yemen, pero se deja describir con las mismas voces.[56]

Abulcasim does not negate the existence of the moon, either in Bengal or Yemen. What he refuses to accept is rather the ability of words to evoke his aesthetic sensibility, in the same way that Marino deplores his own verbal construction of the rose in 'Una rosa amarilla', and Borges disapproves of his own rendering of the tiger in 'El otro tigre'. In other words, it is not the realm of the signified but the capability of the signifier to refer to the signified that is challenged in Borges's narrative.

While Borges deplores the manipulation of the signified in the representational process, Calvino's view of the issue is different in focus. He is not so much interested in mourning the loss of the signified as in investigating how the signifier operates in order to approximate the real. That is, while Borges focuses on the conflict between representation and reality and especially the incapacity of language to represent the real, Calvino explores the possibility of how much reality can be linguistically presented. The premise of one of Calvino's later

---

[55] Borges, 'La busca de Averroes', in his *Obras completas 1923-1972*, pp. 582-88 (first publ. 1949).
[56] Borges, 'La busca de Averroes', pp. 584-85.

novels, *Il castello dei destini incrociati*,[57] while illustrating the reductive tendency of textualisation, shows a promising way in which the signifiers can be used to approach the real: the combinatory process. The novel comprises two separate novellas: *Il castello* and *La taverna*, both of which have similar situations at the beginning: after wandering through forests, two groups of travellers manage to find shelter (a castle and a tavern respectively) and, upon entering the secluded sites, they are deprived of speech. The only way they can relate their experience is through a pack of tarot cards. The cards that these travellers need to use in order to tell their stories are analogous to human language; their experience, no matter how complex and confusing, is mediated by the cards in the same way that human experience is subject to the intervention of language.[58] What is implicit here is the juxtaposition between the richness and infiniteness of human experience and the limits of linguistic elements, which in this case are equivalent to the number of tarot cards. At first glance, this seems to pose an obstacle since much of the experience is likely to be filtered out in a verbal rendition. Yet, what is significant in this story is the fact that, even though the number of cards is limited, the combination of cards produces an infinite series of narratives. This combinatory process can be used to reflect the multiplicity and immensity of human experience, even though meaning is not vouchsafed in every result.[59] The idea can be summed up in a statement made by Faust, an archetypal character in the novel:

---

[57] Calvino, *Il castello dei destini incrociati*, in his *Romanzi e racconti*, ii, 499-610 (first publ. 1969).

[58] Interestingly, Constance Markey analyses this premise in the light of Saussure's theory of *langue* and *parole* in a deconstructive manner. While the arrangement of the cards represents a system that imposes order or consistent meaning on given sets of signs resembles what Saussure means by *langue*, the actual reading of signs, or *parole*, tends to undermine the system. See Markey, *Italo Calvino: A Journey toward Postmodernism*, pp. 99-100.

[59] For some critics, Calvino's penchant for combinatory play is related to his interest in the works of the OULIPO (*Ouvroir de littérature potentielle*). See Warren F. Motte, Jr., 'Calvino's Combinatorics', *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 6 (1986), 81-87; Anna Botta, 'Calvino and the Oulipo: An Italian Ghost in the Combinatory Machine?', *Modern Language Notes*, 112 (1997), 81-89; Umberto Eco, 'La combinatoria dei possibili e l'incombenza della morte', in his *Sugli specchi e altri saggi* (Milan: Bompiani, 1985), pp. 196-211.

> c'è un numero finito d'elementi le cui combinazioni si moltiplicano a miliardi di miliardi, e di queste solo poche trovano una forma e un senso e s'impongono in mezzo a un pulviscolo senza senso e senza forma; come le settantotto carte del mazzo di tarocchi nei cui accostamenti appaiono sequenze di storie che subito si disfano.[60]

For Calvino, this act of combination is by no means insignificant.[61] If Calvino regards the reductive aspect of textualisation as indispensable in 'Il guidatore notturno', the combinatory process that he explores in *Il castello dei destini incrociati* broadens the scope of meaning that linguistic elements make and, to a certain degree, makes up for the loss of the multiplicity of reality that occurs when it is textually transcribed.

Authorship

The graduation from 'work' to 'text' in the narratives of both authors affects several issues that surround textual production. The concept of the author is also influenced by such a change. In the traditional domain of 'work', the author is regarded as the father and the owner of his work. However, in Barthes's concept of 'text', such belief is no longer tenable:

> The Text [...] is read without the father's signature. [...] It is not that the author cannot 'come back' into the Text, into his text; however, he can only do so as a 'guest', so to speak. If the author is a novelist, he inscribes himself in his text as

[60] Calvino, *Il castello dei destini incrociati*, p. 589.
[61] Literature itself, he argues, is a combinatorial game that pursues the possibilities that are implicit in the material. See Calvino, 'Cibernetica e fantasmi', p. 221.

> one of his characters, as another figure sewn into the rug; his signature is no longer privileged and paternal, the locus of genuine truth, but rather, ludic.[62]

For Barthes, when 'work' becomes 'text', the author is changed into a character and 'text', instead of the author, becomes the main focal point.

In Calvino's case, this change in the concept of authorship also affects narrative. In 'Cibernetica e fantasmi', he calls for a readjustment of the definition of the author, especially since writing is perceived as an interaction:

> ciò che sparirà sarà la figura dell'autore, questo personaggio a cui si continuano ad attribuire funzioni che no gli competono, l'autore come espositore della propria anima alla mostra permanente delle anime, l'autore come utente d'organi sensori e interpretativi più ricettivi della media, l'autore questo personaggio anacronistico, portatore di messaggi, direttore di coscienze, dicitore di conferenze alle società culturali.[63]

In place of the traditional notion of the author, Calvino proposes the idea of the author as a machine, which performs the task of combining existing linguistic elements in order to create meaningful narrative. This leads him to an identification of the authorial figure with that of *Il bagatto* in the tarot deck in *Il castello dei destini incrociati*. *Il bagatto* is an obscure name which can be roughly translated as *the magician* or *the juggler*. Calvino mentions this similarity in a story in *La taverna*, 'Anch'io cerco di dire la mia', which the narrator purports to relate his own experience:

---

[62] Barthes, 'From Work to Text', p. 78.
[63] Calvino, 'Cibernetica e fantasmi', p. 216.

> Forse è arrivato il momento d'ammettere che il tarocco numero uno [*il bagatto*] è il solo che rappresenta onestamente quello che sono riuscito a essere: un giocoliere o illusionista che dispone sul suo banco da fiera un certo numero di figure e spostandole, connettandole e scambiandole ottiene un certo numero d'effetti.[64]

However, even though the role of the author seems to be reduced to that of a machine or a magician, this figure is still what Marilyn Schneider regards as 'the unifying Ariadnean thread of Calvino's perpetually changing, labyrinthine tarot mosaic'.[65] In other words, it is this slippery figure of the author that creates verbal meaning out of the complex jumble of unfiltered experience.[66]

Borges's concept of authorship follows a similar line. Like Barthes, Borges argues that the figure of the author is not as important as the text. In 'La flor de Coleridge', he discusses how the texts of the three authors, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, H. G. Wells, and Henry James, develop a more or less similar idea concerning time travelling and a souvenir from the future.[67] Borges is interested

---

[64] Calvino, *Il castello dei destini incrociati*, p. 596.

[65] Marilyn Schneider, 'Calvino at a Crossroads: *Il castello dei destini incrociati*', *PMLA*, 95 (1980), 73-90 (p. 81).

[66] Other issues that concern this shift in the meaning of authorship are creation and inspiration. Traditionally, 'work' arises out of the author's imagination; it is considered to be his or her creation. However, it does not mean that when 'work' becomes 'text', the author does not need to rely upon his or her creativity in constructing narrative; what one means by 'creativity' or 'innovation' also needs to be redefined in the new framework of text as a product of the combinatory process. According to Jerry A. Varsava: 'It is not that combinative aesthetics precludes *innovation* but that innovation takes place in a predefined context, i.e., the 'world of juggling', in a context replete with conventions and social histories. [...] Calvino's position accounts for innovation in a manner greatly different from the romantico-realist theory of literary production as the private act of a genial temperament. Innovation is no longer seen as a function of 'free' personal genius floating in a self-defined creative system.' (Varsava, 'Calvino's Combinative Aesthetics: Theory and Practice', *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 6 (1986), 11-18 (p. 13). His italics.) For Varsava, Calvino has moved away from the traditional (i.e. romantico-realist) concept of authorship and embraced Barthes's concept of textual authorship, in which the author is compared to that of the machine or the magician, whose creative power lies in his or her ability to combine linguistic elements to represent reality.

[67] In the essay, Borges quotes Coleridge as saying: 'If a man could pass through Paradise in a dream, and have a flower presented to him as a pledge that his soul had really been there, and if he

in how strikingly similar ideas are treated in the three texts and how texts interact with each other without the interference of an authorial figure. For Borges, the emphasis should shift towards the interaction of texts, rather than the transfer of influence among authors:

> Claro está que si es válida la doctrina de que todos los autores son un autor, tales hechos son insignificantes. En rigor, no es indispensable ir tan lejos; el panteísta que declara que la pluralidad de los autores es ilusoria, encuentra inesperado apoyo en el clasicista, según el cual esa pluralidad importa muy poco. Para las mentes clásicas, la literatura es lo esencial, no los individuos.[68]

Borges's belief that the individual author is not as important as text is interesting in the sense that, for him, literature should be regarded as a web of interacting texts, rather than individual works written by individual writers.[69] This idea corresponds to Barthes's argument that 'the Text's metaphor is that of the *network* [*réseau*]: if the Text expands, it is under the effect of a *combinatorial*, a *systematics* [...]'.[70]

Nevertheless, unlike Calvino, who prefers to explore the possibility of how much the real can be represented through the combinatory process, Borges tends to focus on the emotional anguish of the author and his or her incapacity to represent reality in its original minutiae. In 'El Aleph',[71] for instance, he describes the rivalry between the two writers, Borges the narrator and Carlos

---

found that flower in his hand when he awoke – Ay! – and what then?'. Borges then proceeds to compare this statement to Wells's *The Time Machine* and James's *The Sense of the Past*.

[68] Borges, 'La flor de Coleridge', p. 641.

[69] Borges also proposes a similar idea in another essay: 'La literatura no es agotable, por la suficiente y simple razón de que un solo libro no lo es. El libro no es un ente incomunicado: es una relación, es un eje de innumerables relaciones' (Borges, 'Nota sobre (hacia) Bernard Shaw', in his *Obras completas 1923-1972*, pp. 747-49 (p. 747)).

[70] Barthes, 'From Work to Text', p. 78. Italics his.

[71] Borges, 'El Aleph', in his *Obras completas 1923-1972*, pp. 617-28 (first publ. 1949).

Argentino Daneri, and how their encounter with the Aleph influences their perception in terms of writing.[72] According to Daneri, the Aleph is an extraordinary, marvellous object in the sense that 'un Aleph es uno de los puntos del espacio que contiene todos los puntos'[73] and that it is 'el lugar donde están, sin confundirse, todos los lugares del orbe, vistos desde todos los ángulos'.[74] The Aleph is a point in which everything in the world exists; it is a fantastic object which transcends its own spatial and temporal limits. In other words, it paradoxically represents the transcendence of representational limits.

While Daneri uses the Aleph as a guiding light for the ambitious task of writing a poem describing the world in its entirety,[75] Borges the narrator is intimidated by the Aleph because it exposes him to his failure in transcribing what he sees in words. Upon seeing the Aleph, he recognises the futility of the author's attempt to represent the complete richness of human experience via language:

> Arribo, ahora, al inefable centro de mi relato; empieza, aquí, mi desesperación de escritor. Todo lenguaje es un alfabeto de símbolos cuyo ejercicio presupone un pasado que los interlocutores comparten; ¿cómo trasmitir a los otros el infinito Aleph, que mi temerosa memoria apenas abarca?[76]

---

[72] For some literary critics, 'El Aleph' represents Borges's attempt to rework Dante Alighieri's *La divina commedia*. For more details, see Emir Rodríguez Monegal, *Jorge Luis Borges: A Literary Biography*, pp. 413-14; Jon Thiem, 'Borges, Dante, and the Poetics of Total Vision', *Comparative Literature*, 40 (1988), 97-121; María Rosa Menocal, *Writing in Dante's Cult of Truth: From Borges to Boccaccio* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1991), esp. Chapter 4; Humberto Núñez-Faraco, 'In search of the Aleph: Memory, Truth, and Falsehood in Borges's Poetics', *Modern Language Review*, 92 (1997), 613-29.

[73] Borges, 'El Aleph', p. 623.

[74] Borges, 'El Aleph', p. 623.

[75] Borges, 'El Aleph', p. 620: '[Daneri] se proponía versificar toda la redondez del planeta; en 1941 ya había despachado unas hectáreas del estado de Queensland, más de un kilómetro del curso del Ob, un gasómetro al norte de Veracruz, las principales casas de comercio de la parroquia de la Concepción, la quinta de Mariana Cambaceres de Alvear en la calle Once de Septiembre, en Belgrano, y un establecimiento de baños turcos no lejos del acreditado acuario de Brighton.'

[76] Borges, 'El Aleph', p. 624.

The Aleph can be regarded as a dangerous object for the author since it highlights his or her own incapability and the limits of language. It is not surprising that, after his encounter with the Aleph, Borges the narrator experiences anguish and frustration:

> [yo] sentí vértigo y lloré, porque mis ojos habían visto ese objeto secreto y conjetural, cuyo nombre usurpan los hombres, pero que ningún hombre ha mirado: el inconcebible universo.[77]

The changed concept of authorship therefore is in line with the shift from 'work' to 'text'. While Calvino is able to find a proper role for the author in the new framework of combinatory aesthetics, Borges focuses on the author's inaptitude in face of the multiplicity of reality, detailing specifically the frustration and emotional anxiety that the author feels in the process of textualisation.

Readership and Translation

With the emphasis moving away from the author to a web of interactive texts, Barthes also redefines the concept of readership. If, for him, valuing the traditional author is tantamount to 'impos[ing] a limit on [the] text, furnish[ing] it with a final signified, clos[ing] the writing',[78] the reader is more important, not only because meaning is conceptualised in the mind of the reader, but also because reading can also be regarded as an active activity like writing. According to Barthes:

> the Text requires an attempt to abolish (or at least to lessen) the distance between writing and reading, not by intensifying the reader's projection into the

---

[77] Borges, 'El Aleph', p. 626.
[78] Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', trans. by Stephen Heath, in his *Image, Music, Text*, pp. 142-48 (p. 147) (first publ. 1968).

> work, but by linking the two together in a single signifying process [*pratique signifiante*].[79]

What Barthes means here is that reading should not be considered a process of consumption so much as an active, indispensable part of the system of textual signification. In this system, reading is regarded as a *praxis*, which demands active collaboration from the reader.

Borges and Calvino also agree that the role of the reader is significant in the process of literary communication. For Borges, the reader is in fact one of the major components that ensures the communicative process can be completed:

> The reader is very important, because a book is a dead thing until it is opened and read. A book is a thing among things. When you open it and read it, if you are the right reader and its author is the right author, then the whole thing springs into life, the book arrives, the aesthetic fact happens.[80]

The book, for Borges, does not mean the tangible object that is made up of pages of written words (i.e. what Barthes means by 'work'); it is a process of literary communication from an author to a reader, which involves not only the physical aspect of leafing through a book but also the conceptualising process in the mind of the reader. Calvino also perceives the importance of reading. For him, reading not only consummates literary experience, but it also leads to the space of meditation and dialogue between the reader's world and the text's:

---

[79] Barthes, 'From Work to Text', p. 79.
[80] Borges, 'Borges on Borges', in *In Memory of Borges*, p. 45.

> la lettura apre spazi di interrogazione e di meditazione e di esame critico, insomma di libertà; la lettura è un rapporto con noi stessi e non solo col libro, col nostro mondo interiore attraverso il mondo che il libro ci apre.[81]

Like Barthes, both authors recognise the importance of the reader. For them, the reader is not a passive agent that docilely takes in the author's messages; instead, reading is the site where the text creates its meaning. Meaning, therefore, is not deemed a solid and consistent unit that is passed from the author to the reader; it is rather a product of a series of negotiations between text and reader.

'Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote'[82] testifies to Borges's belief in the important role the reader plays. The story centres around an eccentric eponymous writer who aims to write a book that is identical to Cervantes's *Don Quijote*. Even though he sets out to rewrite *Don Quijote* word for word, Menard claims that he does not copy and the narrator of the story totally agrees with him as he sees the manuscripts on which Menard has laboured: 'Multiplicó los borradores; corrigió tenazmente y desgarró miles de páginas manuscritas'.[83] Menard's curious attempt brings to light several issues that surround the production of text, such as originality, authorship, and intentionality.[84] Reading is also another important issue of this story, especially when Menard's project is relevant to the blurring of the traditional boundary between writing and reading. His attempt to rewrite *Don*

---

[81] Calvino, 'Il libro, i libri', in his *Saggi 1945-1985*, ii, 1846-60 (p. 1860) (first publ. 1984). The paper was given at the Feria del Libro in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

[82] Borges, 'Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote', in his *Obras completas 1923-1972*, pp. 444-50 (first publ. 1941).

[83] Borges, 'Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote', p. 450.

[84] For more details on Menard and the issue of his real identity, see Oscar Tacca, '¿Quién es Pierre Menard?', *Boletín de la Academia Argentina de Letras*, 241-42 (1996), 301-25. For more details on Menard and plagiarism, see Michael Wreen, 'Once is not Enough?', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 30 (1990), 149-58; Christopher Janaway, 'Borges and Danto: A Reply to Michael Wreen', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 32 (1992), 72-76; Jesús Aguilar, 'Can Pierre Menard be the Author of *Don Quixote*?', *Variaciones Borges*, 8 (1999), 166-77. Jorge J. E. Gracia uses the story as a springboard to propose his theory of the distinction between literature and philosophy. See Jorge J. E. Gracia, 'Borges's 'Pierre Menard': Philosophy or Literature?', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 59 (2001), 45-57.

Quijote can be regarded as his own reading of the text, as he claims to approach the text from his own perspective:

> Ser, de alguna manera, Cervantes y llegar al Quijote le pareció menos arduo — por consiguiente, menos interesante — que seguir siendo Pierre Menard y llegar al Quijote, a través de las experiencias de Pierre Menard.[85]

To an extent, what Menard tries to achieve is perhaps what is tautological: as Barthes suggests, reading is an activity as active as writing since it requires the reader to create meaning out of surrounding context, be it historical, social, or authorial. Menard's project thus signals such an active aspect of reading, since he aims to relate the text of *Don Quijote* to his contemporary *Weltanschauung*. In discussing the story, James E. Irby also suggests the relation between reading and writing:

> to write a text is to offer a reading of one or more previous texts, to read a text is to write or trace in mind and memory one or more subsequent texts, neither aspect being separate from an ongoing universal network — or textwork — of signs which traverse both readers and writers and are always 'already there' and other than themselves.[86]

Irby's notion of 'textwork' resembles Barthes's concept of textuality, which is fluid and dynamic, awaiting the reader's appropriation. Following this line of thought, the textual production of *Don Quijote* varies from one reader to another, depending upon which context or approach that the reader chooses to appropriate it. In fact, even if readers know its historical milieu, i.e. who wrote *Don Quijote*

---

[85] Borges, 'Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote', p. 447.
[86] James E. Irby, 'Some notes on "Pierre Menard"', in *Simply a Man of Letters*, pp. 155-64 (p. 156).

and when the text was produced, this does not guarantee that they will reach exactly the same meaning. Here Menard's project signals an opposite extreme, in which a reader tries to appropriate the text using his own historical and social location. In this light, the concept of authorship is downplayed and replaced by the liberatory concept of reading and the multiplicity of meaning. This can be seen in the narrator's attempt to find new meaning, firmly believing that Menard has written part of *Don Quijote* himself:

> Por ejemplo, examinemos el XXXVIII de la primera parte, 'que trata del curioso discurso que hizo don Quixote de las armas y las letras'. Es sabido que D. Quijote (como Quevedo en el pasaje análogo, y posterior, de *La hora de todos*) falla el pleito contra las letras y en favor de las armas. Cervantes era un viejo militar: su fallo se explica. ¡Pero que el don Quijote de Pierre Menard — hombre contemporáneo de *La trahison des clercs* y de Bertrand Russell — reincida en esas nebulosas sofisterías![87]

This endless production of new meaning leads to an analysis of the narrator, which is in a way as important as Menard. The anonymous narrator, possibly a literary critic, carefully scrutinises Menard's work, both visible and invisible, praises his rewriting project and judges that his work is far richer than Cervantes's:

> El texto de Cervantes y el de Menard son verbalmente idénticos, pero el segundo es casi infinitamente más rico. (Más ambiguo, dirán sus detractores; pero la ambigüedad es una riqueza.)[88]

---

[87] Borges, 'Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote', p. 449. His italics.
[88] Borges, 'Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote', p. 449.

In applauding his curious project, the narrator firmly believes that Menard rewrites a part of *Don Quijote* while still being Pierre Menard. The narrator even confesses that sometimes he imagines that Menard does not stop but goes on to rewrite the whole novel; this gives him an excuse to read the whole novel as if it were written by Menard: '¿Confesaré que suelo imaginar que la terminó y que leo el Quijote — todo el Quijote — como si lo hubiera pensado Menard?'[89] In a way, the narrator's attempt to read the text by claiming Menard as its author reflects the empowerment of his own reading which enables the text to be interpreted in a new light. This is made possible by the repositioning of a historical location of the author, or *history*, an element that is crucial to the narrator's reading. The dependence on history is also reflected in the section of *Don Quijote* that Menard rewrites (and that the narrator *chooses* to cite):

> ... *la verdad, cuya madre es la historia, émula del tiempo, depósito de las acciones, testigo de lo pasado, ejemplo y aviso de lo presente, advertencia de lo por venir.*[90]

After this brief citation, the narrator proceeds to comment upon it as follows:

> La historia, *madre* de la verdad; la idea es asombrosa. Menard, contemporáneo de William James, no define la historia como una indagación de la realidad sino como su origen. La verdad histórica, para él, no es lo que sucedió; *es lo que juzgamos que sucedió.*[91]

It is not only Menard who considers that the historical truth is 'es lo que juzgamos que sucedió', the narrator also shares the same belief because his

---

[89] Borges, 'Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote', p. 447.
[90] Borges, 'Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote', p. 449. His italics.
[91] Borges, 'Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote', p. 449. My italics.

judgement of Menard's *Don Quijote* in the light of Menard's historical context, no matter how incredible, reflects his concept of history as basis of meaningful construction. For Menard and the narrator, the fact that history is the mother of truth is highlighted because the historical location of a text is crucial to its production of meaning. However, at the same time, Menard's curious project and the narrator's reading point towards the notion of history as what is constructed and influenced by human beings, rather than what really happened. The sense of truth as predominantly reliant upon history is, to a certain degree, accordingly absurd and arbitrary.

The ending does not stress Menard's writing so much as Menard's and the narrator's reading. Instead of emphasising the writing act, it shows how the production of textual meaning lies predominantly in the act of reading, and how much, in a sarcastic note, the notion of authorship comes into play:

> Esa técnica de aplicación infinita [de Menard] nos insta a recorrer la Odisea como si fuera posterior a la Eneida y el libro *Le jardin du Centaure* de Madame Henri Bachelier como si fuera de Madame Henri Bachelier. Esa técnica puebla de aventura los libros más calmosos. Atribuir a Louis Ferdinand Céline o a James Joyce la *Imitación de Cristo* ¿no es una suficiente renovación de esos tenues avisos espirituales?[92]

While this story can be used as a satire against overdependence upon the concept of authorship in textual interpretation, it simultaneously celebrates the liberation of reading. It shows how the meaning of *Don Quijote* is destabilised and dispersed because of the multiplicity of readers' responses to the text. In a sense,

---

[92] Borges, 'Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote', p. 450. His italics.

Cervantes's and Menard's *Don Quijote* can represent different readings of the same text which has changed through time:

> Pierre Menard is, in his way, the embodiment of Time: what he does to the text of *Don Quijote* is no more and no less than what Time has done, he changes the meanings of words without changing the words themselves. When we read *Don Quijote* ourselves we reproduce it just as Menard does, because we are people of the twentieth century [...].[93]

Like Borges, Calvino stresses the importance of the reader figure in his text and he even uses the reader as the protagonist in *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore*. The very first paragraphs of the novel describe the reading act of the male protagonist, addressing him as 'tu':

> Stai per cominciare a leggere il nuovo romanzo *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore* di Italo Calvino. Rilassati. Raccogliti. Allontana da te ogni altro pensiero. Lascia che il mondo che ti circonda sfumi nell'indistinto. [...] Prendi la posizione più comoda: seduto, sdraiato, raggomitolato, coricato.[94]

However, as the novel unfolds, the reader needs to search for the actual text of *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore* that has disappeared owing to printing mistakes. The search for the continuing part of the novel leads on to another beginning of another novel. The reader, frustrated by a never-ending series of textual beginnings, falls victim to his desire for the narrative ending and sets out to look for the mastermind behind this chaotic scheme.

---

[93] Sturrock, *Paper Tigers*, p. 166. See also Shaw, *Borges: Ficciones*, pp. 22-25.
[94] Calvino, *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore*, in his *Romanzi e racconti*, ii, 611-870 (p. 613).

Even though the reader is the main protagonist of the novel, his fate is subject to the development of the plot, which sees him falling in love with another reader and getting arrested in a foreign country. To a certain degree, he is a passive character, whose fate is dependent on the narrative turns. His passivity in face of narrative developments has a close affinity with his anonymity:

> Chi sia il Lettore, è presto detto: lo si immagini un Tu indistinto, senza volto, il Tu retorico delle vecchie poesie trasformato nel fantasma di un giovanotto qualunque, anonimo fino al punto da non avere neppure bisogno di esprimere, in quanto personaggio, l'anonimia. Questo lettore è una nullità, un Tu da pubbliche relazioni.[95]

While 'Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote' emphasises the significance of the reading process as active collaboration in reconstructing the text, the protagonist in Calvino's novel hints at a certain level of passivity. However, for Calvino, the power of delimiting the textual meaning does not fall into the hands of the author either. Silas Flannery, an embodiment of the authorial figure in the novel, is in fact a writer in distress, again being depicted as a passive victim of his own desire for a woman, a female reader.

In Borges's story, the textual control is shifted from the author to the reader; this significant power is transferred again in Calvino's novel to the mastermind behind all confusion, the translator Ermes Marana. According to Mr Cavedagna, an editorial staff member from whom the Reader seeks advice with regard to printing errors, Marana is a young translator with all proper credentials. He hands in the pages of the translation of *Senza temere il vento e la vertigine* on time; however, after the manuscript has been passed to the printer, the publisher

---

[95] Cesare Garboli, 'Come sei, Lettrice?', *Paragone*, 366 (1980), 63-71 (p. 65).

discovers odd mistakes in Marana's translation. He is summoned and, to everyone's surprise, confesses that he does not know the source language. It transpires that he has translated from a French novel instead. This causes a great deal of confusion in the publishing firm since some of his translations have already gone into print and been distributed.

The confusion in the publishing firm is only a part of Marana's sinister project; he dreams of 'una letteratura tutta d'apocrifi, di false attribuzioni, d'imitazioni e contraffazioni e pastiches.'[96] By confusing the texts of one writer with those of another, Marana aims to confuse the whole literary industry, depriving it of certain fixed ideas such as the author or the textual source. In other words, by mystifying and undermining these traditional ideas, Marana, like Barthes, reduces the idea of meaningful work to a stream of text. This idea is supported by one of his letters to the publishing firm:

> Che importa il nome dell'autore in copertina? Trasportiamoci col pensiero di qui a tremila anni. Chissà quali libri della nostra epoca si saranno salvati, e di chissà quali autori si ricorderà ancora il nome. Ci saranno libri che resteranno famosi ma che saranno considerati opere anonime come per noi l'epopea di Ghilgamesh; ci saranno autori di cui sarà sempre famoso il nome ma di cui non resterà nessuna opera, come è successo a Socrate; o forse tutti i libri superstiti saranno attribuiti a un unico autore misterioso, come Omero.[97]

Marana thus reminds the reader of the inherent character of text, of its anonymous and collective nature. As Calvino suggests in *Il castello dei destini incrociati*, the author is nothing but a person who performs a combinatory

---

[96] Calvino, *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore*, p. 767.
[97] Calvino, *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore*, p. 708.

process, arranging signs and making sense out of them. The signs themselves belong to the collective realm of language, which is shared by all human beings. Like Menard in his rewriting, Marana emancipates the text from authorial appropriation. This leads to the anonymous character of the text, inviting appropriation on the part of the reader or, in this case, the translator.[98]

The fact that Ermes Marana is a translator, a person who traditionally facilitates the communicative process between at least two parties who use different languages, is significant. Ironically, he complicates the communication of literary experience by mixing up texts that belong to different authors. This ironic nature is also reflected in his name: Ermes hints at Hermes, the Greek god of communication, who is also famous for his playful nature and his tendency to play tricks,[99] while Marana points towards the Spanish word *maraña*, which means both tangle and trick.[100] Marana's mischievous character reflects Calvino's view of translation, in which he believes that translation is inherent in every reading process and that the negotiation between the translator and the text is similar to the one that the reader has with the text and with himself or herself:

> Tradurre è il vero modo di leggere un testo; questo credo sia stato detto già molte volte; posso aggiungere che per un autore il riflettere sulla traduzione d'un proprio testo, il discutere col traduttore, è il vero modo di leggere se stesso, di capire bene cosa ha scritto e perché.[101]

---

[98] JoAnn Cannon also shares this belief, arguing that 'the anonymous or spurious text invites the reader's active participation, the violation of the text by the reader' (Cannon, *Italo Calvino: Writer and Critic* (Ravenna: Longo, 1981), p. 107).

[99] In an interview, Calvino asserts his predilection for the god. 'Among his virtues, I admire above all his lightness, in a world full of brutality, his dreaming imagination [...]' (Calvino, 'Vorrei essere Mercuzio', in his *Saggi 1945-1985*, ii, p. 2911 (first publ. 1984)).

[100] See Paoli, *Presencia de Borges en la literatura italiana contemporánea*, p. 44. Cesare Segre, on the other hand, suggests that Marana is a surname of a literary adventurer. See his 'Se una notte d'inverno un romanziere sognasse un aleph di dieci colori', in his *Teatro e romanzo* (Turin: Einaudi, 1984), pp. 135-73 (p. 154).

[101] Calvino, 'Tradurre è il vero modo di leggere un testo', in his *Saggi 1945-1985*, ii, 1825-31 (p. 1827).

Thus, Calvino expands the meaning of what we traditionally associate with translation; it also includes the interpretive process inherent in any act of reading. As literature uses language as its means to convey its messages, literary interpretation always involves a process of translation, of fathoming in the reader's mind what collective linguistic units mean by pitting them against his or her own experience.[102] The nature of the medium of literature, language, necessitates translation:

> Each text is unique, yet at the same time it is the translation of another text. No text can be completely original because language itself, in its very essence, is already a translation – first from the nonverbal world, and then, because each sign and each phrase is a translation of another sign, another phrase.[103]

According to Octavio Paz, translation is not only inherent in any communicative act, but it also reflects, as Marana endeavours to show, the collective nature of language and therefore its tricky and slippery nature when one uses it.[104] The fact that the translator plays a vital role in the narrative does not contradict Jonathan Usher's premise that behind the novel 'lies a serious essay on the triangular relationship between writer, reader, and text [...].'[105] This is because, as we have already seen, the translator in a sense, functions both as a writer and a reader.

---

[102] I agree with Wiley Feinstein's argument that Calvino uses the notion of translation to point to the limits of text. See Feinstein, 'The Doctrinal Core of *If on a winter's night a traveller*', in *Calvino Revisited*, pp. 147-55 (p. 149).

[103] Octavio Paz, 'Translation: Literature and Letters', trans. by Irene del Corral, in *Theories of Translation: An Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida*, ed. by Rainer Schulte and John Biguenets (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 152-62 (p. 154).

[104] See also McLaughlin, *Italo Calvino*, p. 127.

[105] Jonathan Usher, 'Interruptory Mechanisms in Calvino's *Se una notte ...*', *Italian Studies*, 45 (1990), 81-102 (p. 81).

From these examples, we can see how both Borges and Calvino are preoccupied with the issues of reading and translation. Language, being collective in nature, cannot avoid the generalisation of human experience and there is therefore plenty of room for interpretation when it comes to deciphering what the author states. This is partly the reason why reading and translating can become treacherous, hence the character of Marana, who is elusive and remains at large at the end. What the author means is not always what the reader receives, or thinks he or she receives. In addition to the complex relationships between language and reality, the relationships between the text and the reader (or the translator) can also hinder the author's wish to convey his or her notions of reality to the reader.

Towards an Aesthetics of Silence

So far we have seen how the change from 'work' to 'text' affects how Borges and Calvino treat such fundamental issues as text, authorship, readership, and translation. This change is regarded as a gesture of liberation, setting narrative free from its original historicity. However, this state of emancipation can be seen as generating anarchic confusion from the point of view of the author since it means that the author can no longer have control over his or her narrative, as the production of meaning invites the collaboration of the reader's subjectivity. According to Susan Sontag, this state of intersubjectivity is strongly felt as a troublesome problem:

> Language is experienced not merely as something shared but as something corrupted, weighed down by historical accumulation. Thus, for each conscious artist, the creation of a work means dealing with two potentially antagonistic domains of meaning and their relationships. One is his own meaning (or lack of

> it); the other is the set of second-order meanings that both extend his own language and encumber, compromise, and adulterate it.[106]

For Sontag, this leads to a gesture of silence, since it is an attempt of some writers to free themselves from the bondage of linguistic limits. By saying nothing, they refuse to subject themselves to the compromising situation in which the meaning of their utterances is bound to be distorted.[107]

For Borges and Calvino, silence is also used in a similar context. It becomes one of the most appropriate ways to deal with the issues of reality and linguistic representation since, for them, it signifies the transcendence of linguistic limits in interpreting the multiplicity of the real. For Borges, silence is used both stylistically and thematically. In 'El acercamiento a Almotásim',[108] for example, silence becomes the stylistic device which both enhances the structure of the tale as well as delivering the message. The tale, originally published as a note in Borges's collection of essays, *Historia de la eternidad*,[109] is disguised as a book review that Borges writes for an Indian novel called *The Approach to Al-Mu'tasim*. It is a combination of picaresque novel and detective story in which the protagonist, an anonymous law student in Bombay, finds himself in a war between the Hindus and the Muslims. Having killed (or believing he has killed) a Hindu, he attempts to escape a police hunt by roaming round India. Then he

---

[106] Susan Sontag, 'The Aesthetics of Silence', in her *Styles of Radical Will* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1969), pp. 3-34 (p. 15). Sontag is not the only scholar who is interested in silence and its impact on art. For more details on the history of the literature of silence, see Ihab Hassan, 'The Literature of Silence', in his *The Postmodern Turn: Essays in Postmodern Theory and Culture* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1987), pp. 3-22; George Steiner, 'Silence and the Poet', in his *Language and Silence: Essays 1958-1966* (London: Penguin, 1969; first publ. 1967), pp. 57-76.

[107] For Sontag, silence is 'the artist's ultimate other-worldly gesture: by silence, he frees himself from servile bondage to the world, which appears as patron, client, consumer, antagonist, arbiter, and distorter of his work' (Sontag, 'The Aesthetics of Silence', p. 6).

[108] Borges, 'El acercamiento a Almotásim', in his *Obras completas 1923-1972*, pp. 414-18 (first publ. 1936).

[109] Borges, *Historia de la eternidad* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Viau y Zona, 1936).

undergoes an interminable series of events in various places in India before he has a revelation that there is a person somewhere who might give him insight into the existential confusion that he is experiencing:

> *En algún punto de la tierra hay un hombre de quien procede esa claridad; en algún punto de la tierra está el hombre que es igual a esa claridad.*[110]

The protagonist then vows to dedicate his life to the pursuit of this mysterious person, whose name is Al-Mu'tasim. After another sequence of encounters and adventures, the protagonist eventually has a chance to meet the mysterious man:

> Al cabo de los años, el estudiante llega a una galería 'en cuyo fondo hay una puerta y una estera barata con muchas cuentas y atrás un resplandor'. El estudiante golpea las manos una y dos veces y pregunta por Almotásim. Una voz de hombre – la increíble voz de Almotásim – lo insta a pasar. El estudiante descorre la cortina y avanza. En ese punto la novela concluye.[111]

However, as the quote says, the novel ends at the moment when the protagonist is about to see Al-Mu'tasim. The refusal on the part of the author to describe the encounter between the two men is not only a stylistic device that is used to capture the reader's attention for the next sequence. It is, according to Borges, a sort of allegory, that is, the mysterious man may be a symbol of God and the journey of the protagonist himself analogous to the search of a soul for its mystical ascension.[112] That God cannot be represented in the narrative is important. He becomes an embodiment of irreducible multiplicity of the real that

---

[110] Borges, 'El acercamiento a Almotásim', p. 416. His italics.
[111] Borges, 'El acercamiento a Almotásim', p. 416.
[112] Borges, 'El acercamiento a Almotásim', p. 417.

exceeds the representative limits of language. There are also descriptions of Al-Mu'tasim scattered in the narrative:

> un judío negro de Kochín que habla de Almotásim, dice que su piel es oscura; un cristiano lo describe sobre una torre con los brazos abiertos; un lama rojo lo recuerda sentado 'como esa imagen de manteca de yak que yo modelé y adoré en el monasterio de Tashilhunpo'.[113]

The conflicting details in these descriptions testify to the fact that Al-Mu'tasim is a protean entity that resists single signification. The imaginary writer of *The Approach to Al-Mu'tasim* is perhaps right in choosing not to describe what Al-Mu'tasim looks like because to do so would mean to reduce his multiform manifestations to a stabilised set of linguistic signs.[114]

In addition to 'El acercamiento a Almotásim', Borges also treats the theme of silence in face of the multiplicity of reality in 'La escritura del Dios'.[115] Tzinacán, the protagonist of the story, is trapped in a pyramid, the inside of which is equally partitioned by a wall. On the other side of the wall dwells a jaguar. Tzinacán only sees the creature through a long barred window at noon when a jailor brings food to both of them. He believes that God, foreseeing devastation and ruin that will befall the world at the end of time, has created a

---

[113] Borges, 'El acercamiento a Almotásim', p. 417.

[114] The reason is partly because of the limits of language in expressing personal ecstatic moments. Since language itself is a set of symbols of shared experience, it cannot be used to represent a moment of ecstasy, which mostly happens when a person is on his or her own. Borges affirms this idea in one of his interviews: '[...] all words need something shared. [...] And if I know the absolute, and you haven't, you can't understand me. That's the real reason. All words imply a reality or an unreality shared by the speaker and the hearer or by the reader and by the writer' (Barnstone, *Borges at Eighty: Conversations*, p. 168). Therefore, the idea that God is represented in different ways is partly because He manifests Himself only in ecstatic moments, catching the believer (or non-believer) off-guard.

[115] Borges, 'La escritura del Dios', in his *Obras completas 1923-1972*, pp. 596-99 (first publ. 1949).

magical sentence to ward off evils. A manifestation of this sentence will only be revealed to the person whom God has already chosen. Tzinacán believes that he himself is the chosen one and, as with the law student's search for Al-Mu'tasim, sets out to look for signs that may lead to the magical sentence. The parallel between the two stories is further strengthened by the fact that both the law student and Tzinacán find the key to the conundrum at the end: while the law student is able to find Al-Mu'tasim, Tzinacán discovers the sought-after secret that God has encrypted in the design on the jaguar's skin. The moment when Tzinacán is able to decipher God's script is described as an ecstatic instance of divine revelation:

> Entonces ocurrió lo que no puedo olvidar ni comunicar. Ocurrió la unión con la divinidad, con el universo [...]. El éxtasis no repite sus símbolos; hay quien ha visto a Dios en un resplandor, hay quien lo ha percibido en una espada o en los círculos de una rosa. Yo vi una Rueda altísima, que no estaba delante de mis ojos, ni detrás, ni a los lados, sino en todas partes, a un tiempo.[116]

Like the appearance of Al-Mu'tasim which changes according to the viewer, the revelation that occurs to Tzinacán is also unique. Like the Aleph, the holy Wheel that he sees is situated outside the human notion of space and is made up of two contradictory agents, fire and ice. It is also infinite and embraces everything on earth. For Tzinacán, the immense Wheel is also a formula of fourteen haphazard words that form the magical sentence he is in search of and uttering this sentence in a loud voice will suffice to make him powerful enough to destroy the pyramid and flee to take revenge on Pedro de Alvarado, who jailed him there.

---

[116] Borges, 'La escritura del Dios', p. 598.

Nonetheless, Tzinacán refuses to pronounce the sentence. His perception of reality transforms when he realises the secret of God's script: he feels that his own identity is equivalent to that of the universe itself.

> Que muera conmigo el misterio que está escrito en los tigres. Quien ha entrevisto el universo, quien ha entrevisto los ardientes designios del universo, no puede pensar en un hombre, en sus triviales dichas o desventuras, aunque ese hombre sea él. Ese hombre *ha sido él* y ahora no le importa. [...] Por eso no pronuncio la fórmula, por eso dejo que me olviden los días, acostado en la oscuridad.[117]

Therefore, his decision not to utter the spell is closely linked with his transformed self. Tzinacán considers that his trivial personal matters should be ignored now that he understands the universe and is able to think on a cosmic level of how all elements in the universe are interrelated. In addition to the transformation of his self, another reason that may explain why Tzinacán refuses to utter the sacred words is the deficiency of language. According to Gabriela Massuh, there are two ways in which this deficiency can be illustrated. By uttering these words, the secret of God's script will be bound in the temporal framework and thus become part of history. In this way, the secret will be deprived of its hallowed status. Moreover, pronouncing these words out loud also confirms the idea that language is made up of linguistic units whose meaning comes from their sequence which is developed in time. This temporal sequence is opposite to Tzinacán's wish that the effect of the spell must be instantaneous.[118] Like the failed description of the divine figure in 'El acercamiento a Almotásim', the nature of language itself in 'La escritura del Dios' hinders Tzinacán's wish to transcend his human condition by uttering the

---

[117] Borges, 'La escritura del Dios', p. 599. His italics.
[118] See Gabriela Massuh, *Borges: una estética del silencio* (Buenos Aires: Editorial de Belgrano, 1980), p. 124.

sacred sentence. In other words, to use language is to affirm his human condition, locking himself up in the temporal and spatial modes invented by human beings.

The limits of language to represent the real that force a person to opt for silence are also illustrated in Calvino's *Palomar* short stories.[119] In 'Serpenti e teschi',[120] for example, Palomar is in Mexico, visiting the ruins of Tula; he is accompanied by a Mexican friend, who is an expert on pre-Columbian civilisation. On the day he visits the ancient ruins, a schoolteacher also takes his students to the site. Unlike Palomar's expert friend who gives detailed explanations and symbolic interpretations of statues, objects, and bas-reliefs at the site, the teacher describes these objects to the students but refrains from giving them interpretive knowledge. He always ends his speech with a phrase: 'Non si sa cosa vuol dire'.[121] Even though they go by separate routes, Palomar and his Mexican friend cross the path of the group of schoolboys several times. Again, the two groups meet at the Wall of the Serpents, which is perhaps the most beautiful part of the ancient ruins, featuring a series of bas-reliefs depicting a sequence of serpents, each holding a human skull in its open jaws. The teacher refuses to give any explanation of the bas-reliefs but simply describes it: 'Questo è il muro dei serpenti. Ogni serpente tiene in bocca un teschio. Non si sa cosa significano'.[122] At this point, Palomar's friend can no longer stand such ignorance; he retorts: 'Sì che si sa! È la continuità della vita e della morte, i serpenti sono la vita, i teschi sono la morte; la vita che è vita perché porta con sé la morte e la morte che è morte perché senza morte non c'è vita ...'.[123]

---

[119] I agree with McLaughlin's argument that, while *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore* deals largely with the realm of literature and language or the so-called the written world, *Palomar* explores the world of things, i.e., the unwritten world. See McLaughlin, *Italo Calvino*, p. 129.
[120] Calvino, 'Serpenti e teschi', in his *Romanzi e racconti*, ii, 954-57 (first publ. 1976).
[121] Calvino, 'Serpenti e teschi', p. 955.
[122] Calvino, 'Serpenti e teschi', p. 956.
[123] Calvino, 'Serpenti e teschi', p. 956.

Palomar, however, sympathises with the schoolteacher and reckons that perhaps the schoolteacher is right, declining to interpret these ancient objects. He doubts whether interpretation will serve any purpose if it is done out of context:

> Una pietra, una figura, un segno, una parola che ci arrivano isolati dal loro contesto sono solo quella pietra, quella figura, quel segno o parola: possiamo tentare di definirli, di descriverli in quanto tali, e basta; se oltre la faccia che presentano a noi essi anche hanno una faccia nascosta, a noi non è dato di saperlo. Il rifiuto di comprendere più di quello che queste pietre ci mostrano è forse il solo modo possibile per dimostrare rispetto del loro segreto; tentare d'indovinare è presunzione, tradimento di quel vero significato perduto.[124]

For Palomar, to attempt to interpret may not do justice to reality, which lies hidden in the ruins. Since he and his friends do not live in that period, they are deprived of the historical context from which the meaning of these bas-reliefs can be properly understood. Thus, the teacher's refusal to give any further details to interpret these signs is perhaps an appropriate way to deal with these ancient objects.

Palomar's reasoning leads to the idea that the meaning of these ruins is unattainable, if not forever lost, since time has eradicated the context from which they can be interpreted. Any interpretation, therefore, is a futile attempt to supply elusive reality with the biased meaning of an interpreter. What is implicit in this tale is not only the fact that reality and words are clearly divorced from each other, but also that words can neither take the place of reality nor presume to interpret it. Like Borges, Calvino here argues that in certain cases the portrayal of

---

[124] Calvino, 'Serpenti e teschi', p. 956.

reality exceeds the limits of language and silence should be employed as a powerful strategy to reflect the imbalance between reality and its textual representation. In addition, for Calvino, silence points to his concept of the unwritten world, whose essence cannot be textualised:

> Il nocciolo del mondo è vuoto, il principio di ciò che si muove nell'universo è lo spazio del niente, attorno all'assenza si costruisce ciò che c'è.[125]

From Silence to Self-Reflective Struggle

However, silence is not an altogether unproblematic solution in face of the disproportionate correspondence between words and things. If silence means an escape from textual limits, it is still dubitable as to how far and to what extent both authors can use this strategy since literature depends upon the production of words and the expression of ideas via textual representation. Even Palomar, who sympathises with the schoolteacher, eventually draws the conclusion that 'Non interpretare è impossibile, come è impossibile trattenersi dal pensare'.[126] Borges also recognises this paradox:

> [...] you know at the same time that life is far richer than your own poor craft; and yet, that craft is all you have; that that craft is finally to justify you somehow. And so you keep on writing.[127]

Oxymoronic as it seems, the articulation of silence in their narratives can be seen as an ironic, if not self-defeating, attempt to transcend the limits of textuality in the framework that textuality allows.[128]

---

[125] Calvino, *Il castello dei destini incrociati*, p. 589.
[126] Calvino, 'Serpenti e teschi', pp. 956-57.
[127] Borges, 'Simply a Man of Letters', p. 12.

As silence represents such a nihilistic, self-destructive gesture, it is not surprising that silence is not the only strategy that both authors choose. For both Borges and Calvino, the struggle of the authors to reflect the problematic relationship between reality and representation can also be used as a promising literary theme. This struggle can be seen in Borges's 'El Aleph', in which the narrator's struggle to define the Aleph (i.e. the complexity of reality *par excellence*) becomes the central core of the story. In 'El Zahir',[129] the narrator (also named Borges) is subject to a similar struggle since his discovery of the Zahir haunts him and causes him sleepless nights and restless days. The Zahir is, for the narrator, not an extraordinary, fantastic object, but only a twenty-centavo coin with some scratches. However, upon seeing the Zahir for the first time, he feels feverish, not unlike what the narrator of 'El Aleph' feels after seeing the fantastic object:

> Pedí una caña de naranja; en el vuelto me dieron el Zahir; lo miré un instante; salí a la calle, tal vez con un principio de fiebre.[130]

The narrator's first discovery of the Zahir in the form of a coin reminds him of all other forms of money that exist in human history, the evocation of which becomes too overwhelming and causes a sense of vertigo in the narrator.[131]

---

[128] Sontag also mentions this strategic irony and many of her witty remarks in 'The Aesthetics of Silence' reflect the irony of the situation, such as 'the art of our time is noisy with appeals for silence' (p. 12) and 'the tendency is toward less and less. But never has 'less' so ostentatiously advanced itself as 'more'' (p. 14).

[129] Borges, 'El Zahir', in his *Obras completas 1923-1972*, pp. 589-95 (first publ. 1949).

[130] Borges, 'El Zahir', p. 590.

[131] Borges's technique of 'enumeración caótica' is used to evoke an overpowering sense of history and multiplicity: 'Pensé en el óbolo de Caronte; en el óbolo que pidió Belisario; en los treinta dineros de Judas; en las dracmas de la cortesana Laís; en la antigua moneda que ofreció uno de los durmientes de Éfeso; en las claras monedas del hechicero de las 1001 Noches, que después eran círculos de papel; en el denario inagotable de Isaac Laquedem; en las sesenta mil piezas de plata, una por cada verso de una epopeya, que Firdusi devolvió a un rey porque no eran de oro; en la onza de oro que hizo clavar Ahab en el mástil; en el florín irreversible de Leopold Bloom; en el luis cuya efigie delató, cerca de Varennes, al fugitivo Luis XVI' (Borges, 'El Zahir', p. 591).

However, even though the narrator tries to spend the Zahir on a drink in another tavern, the Zahir still comes back to haunt him and he cannot erase the image of the coin from his mind.

The narrator's struggle with the Zahir can be associated with Borges's preoccupation with language, since the coin and the word are similar in the sense that they are symbols of something else. If language refers to ideas and objects, money also points towards other objects. In Borges's words, 'el dinero es abstracto, repetí, el dinero es tiempo futuro. Puede ser una tarde en las afueras, puede ser música de Brahms, puede ser mapas, puede ser ajedrez, puede ser café, puede ser las palabras de Epicteto, que enseñan el desprecio del oro'.[132] Money has no significance on its own; its importance lies in its symbolic quality, its protean ability to change into something else. In the same way, the power of words lies in its capacity to evoke feelings or to refer to objects. However, for the narrator of 'El Zahir', this symbolic quality causes his anguish because it leads to the fact that reality cannot be reached directly, except through the intermediary of a symbolic agent, be it money or language. Instead of adopting the gesture of silence, Borges chooses the opposite path by probing into the narrator's relentless struggle with the Zahir. The story ends with a message of grim hope: 'Quizá yo acabe por gastar el Zahir a fuerza de pensarlo y de repensarlo; quizá detrás de la moneda esté Dios.'[133]

While Borges chooses to portray the anguish and frustration of the writer when he recognises the intermediacy of the Zahir and the inevitable distinction between reality and representation, Calvino also approaches the issue along similar lines in 'L'avventura di un fotografo',[134] in which he relates the life of

---

[132] Borges, 'El Zahir', p. 591.
[133] Borges, 'El Zahir', p. 595.
[134] Calvino, 'L'avventura di un fotografo', in his *Romanzi e racconti*, ii, pp. 1096-109.

Antonino Paraggi, who falls in love with photography after his friends ask him to take their photographs on holidays. For Paraggi, photography fascinates him because it is an attempt to capture reality in a split second and reality which is photographed can influence people's perception of the image:

> La realtà fotografata assume subito un carattere nostalgico, di gioia fuggita sull'ala del tempo, un carattere commemorativo, anche se è una foto dell'altro ieri.[135]

While money in 'El Zahir' points towards the future, photography in 'L'avventura di un fotografo' leads back to the past, to a moment which is forever frozen in time. It mediates reality since it can only represent a moment, not the whole duration, of life, in the same way that language represents only a slice, and never the whole, of reality. Photography, therefore, is a mode of representation and, like language, it faces representational limits.

Like the narrator of 'El Zahir', Paraggi also suffers from emotional turmoil, which is caused by the realisation that the reality of life can never be completely attained. Photography can never fully represent life because it brings into relief only a split second in which the photograph is taken. This is clearly seen when Paraggi wishes to take photographs of his girlfriend, Bice, and hopes to find a representative photograph of hers. He learns that it is difficult, if not impossible, to take such a photograph and begins to feel frustrated. He asks Bice to change her poses all the time as he is unsure of what photography really means in relation to reality. At the beginning, he asks her to sit in a big armchair and act naturally. He then feels it is wrong and decides to follow the opposite path by asking her to stand up in a three-quarter turn and carry a tennis racket. Paraggi

---

[135] Calvino, 'L'avventura di un fotografo', p. 1100.

wants to photograph Bice as she would appear in an old sentimental postcard. However, he is still not happy:

> Però ancora [Antonino] non si sentiva su terreno sicuro: non stava per caso cercando di fotografare dei ricordi, anzi, dei vaghi echi di ricordo affioranti dalla memoria? Il suo rifiuto di vivere il presente come ricordo futuro, al modo dei fotografi della domenica, non lo portava a tentare un'operazione altrettanto irreale, cioè a dare un corpo al ricordo per sostituirlo al presente davanti ai suoi occhi?[136]

Since photography, he now believes, should convey the present rather than the past, Paraggi asks Bice to stop standing still and start moving. He realises that 'solo esasperando le pose si poteva raggiungere un'estraneità oggettiva; solo fingendo un movimento arrestato a metà si poteva dare l'impressione del fermo, del non vivente'.[137] However, it is not long before her movement becomes dream-like and grotesque, turning into something else that he does not expect. Paraggi then changes his mind again and decides to capture Bice's femininity by asking her to dress in an evening dress, which reveals more of her body. Bice lets the dress slip down to her feet and stands naked in front of the camera. Paraggi is surprised but his frustration disappears as he feels that he can capture the whole of Bice by photographing her naked.

However, this does not put an end to his desire to continue photographing her. Even though Paraggi and Bice are subsequently married, their relationship does not last long because Paraggi is too obsessed with photography. Eventually Bice leaves him as his passion for photography is far too difficult for her to put up

---

[136] Calvino, 'L'avventura di un fotografo', p. 1104.
[137] Calvino, 'L'avventura di un fotografo', p. 1104.

with. Paraggi continues to take photographs and his desire for photography becomes absurd:

> Su ogni soggetto passava giornate, esaurendo rotoli interi, a intervalli di ore, in modo da seguire i mutamenti della luce e delle ombre. Un giorno si fissò su un angolo della stanza completamente vuoto, con un tubo del termosifone e nient'altro: ebbe la tentazione di continuare a fotografare quel punto e solo quello fino alla fine dei suoi giorni.[138]

His obsession can be compared to the insomnia and restlessness that the narrator of 'El Zahir' suffers. Whilst the narrator of the Zahir laments the unattainability of reality, Paraggi is frustrated by the fact that he can never fully represent life through photography, admitting that 'era anche lui uno di quelli che inseguono la vita che sfugge, un cacciatore dell'inafferrabile, come gli scattatori d'istantanee'.[139] Unlike Borges's 'El Zahir', Calvino's story ends with a shift in focus. While the narrator of Borges's story will continue to think and rethink about the Zahir with the grim hope that *perhaps* he will be able to reach the ultimate truth, Paraggi starts to photograph collages of his own photographs and those from newspapers, perceiving that:

> Esaurite tutte le possibilità, nel momento in cui il cerchio si chiudeva su se stesso, Antonino capì che fotografare fotografie era la sola via che gli restava, anzi la vera via che lui aveva oscuramente cercato fino allora.[140]

---

[138] Calvino, 'L'avventura di un fotografo', p. 1108.
[139] Calvino, 'L'avventura di un fotografo', p. 1103.
[140] Calvino, 'L'avventura di un fotografo', p. 1109.

According to Constance Pierce, the ending of this story is 'like a moral tale, one that celebrates the advantages of self-reflexivity, always in need of defending in a world enamoured of transparency and the 'real''.[141]

Paraggi's shift from photographing objects to photographing photographs themselves in turn sheds light upon the writing act. Instead of paying all attention to life outside, the author should also be concerned with the process of writing and how writing reflects and mediates reality. The author should pay due attention to the struggle that the writer encounters while exploring the unbridgeable gap between representation and reality. Like 'El Zahir', Calvino's story reflects the anguish and frustration the author feels upon recognising the limits of representation. However, unlike 'the Zahir', in which the narrator resigns himself to the textual imprisonment to which he is subject, feeling unsure whether he will be able to attain the ultimate truth, Paraggi views the limits of representation with defiance. For him, even though reality cannot be reached, it does not mean that one should resign oneself and lament the loss of reality. On the contrary, one should at least explore what one could do in such a textual prison in order to narrow, or at least understand, the ontological gap between representation and reality. Michael Wood is right, I believe, when he asserts that:

> Calvino loves and distrusts and displaces language; drives it to its limits and beyond them; devises tests and defeats for it. It would be a mistake, I think, not to take seriously his conviction that language is often a form of failure rather than success.[142]

---

[141] Constance Pierce, 'Calvino on Photography', *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 6 (1986), 130-37 (p. 135).
[142] Michael Wood, *Children of Silence: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* (London: Pimlico, 1998), p. 95.

For Borges and Calvino, since human beings cannot totally refrain from using language, such limits of representation will always be part of the human condition which prevents them from reaching the real in the absolute state. The idea of the textual prison is neither negated nor looked down upon by both authors. What is significant for them is rather the issue of gauging the prison boundaries, albeit differently. What matters is not whether it is possible to reach an ultimate truth, i.e. its full representation via language, but rather, especially for Calvino, the search for new angles through which to look at and explore the struggle we encounter in the light of the paradoxical nature of language, which is the attempt to bridge reality and representation together, whilst being aware that this can never be completely successful.

Chapter 2

Patterns of Knowledge Conceptualisation and the Emergence of Chance

In the first chapter, we have seen how the representational limits of language and textualisation are explored in the narratives of Borges and Calvino, especially when they prevent human beings from representing the real in all its complexity. This so-called human condition is analysed alongside the transition from 'work' to 'text', a process of textualisation which raises a great number of questions surrounding such fundamental issues as authorship and readership. This chapter aims to explore further how the human condition incurs representational limits in knowledge production by focusing on cognition and chance. The first part will analyse how Borges and Calvino wrote their works in an atmosphere of uncertainty with regard to the human capacity to access absolute knowledge of the universe, a doubt partially triggered off by debates surrounding contemporary science. To gauge the internal intricacy of the human mind, some of the main issues which constitute patterns of knowledge conceptualisation, i.e. reductionistic analysis, identity, objectivity, and causality, will be discussed. Subsequently, chance will be analysed as an external factor that disrupts the patterns of knowledge production in the narratives of the two authors, whilst their different attitudes towards such disruption are also highlighted. Finally, the focus will be on the indispensability of the patterns and how the reliance upon them, which in a way incapacitates any attempt at the complete representation of reality, comes to be regarded as part of the human condition.

Science and Contextualisation

In his essay 'Filosofia e letteratura', Calvino calls for greater collaboration between the three main intellectual spheres, i.e. philosophy, literature, and

science, which he hopes will have positive results in generating an effective canon of knowledge:

> Quello che stavo descrivendo come un matrimonio a letti separati, va visto come un *ménage à trois*: filosofia letteratura scienza. La scienza si trova di fronte a problemi non dissimili da quelli della letteratura; costruisce modelli del mondo continuamente messi in crisi, alterna metodo induttivo e deduttivo, e deve sempre stare attenta e non scambiare per leggi obiettive le proprie convenzioni linguistiche.[1]

Science, for Calvino, provides another platform on which problems and crises can be formulated and solved via its own distinctive tools, including induction and deduction.[2] This can be attributed to Calvino's belief that the use of science can help enrich the knowledge of human beings, which is advanced alongside his assumption that science and literature should not be regarded as two distinct realms which do not have any interaction.[3] Literary and Scientific discourses should be viewed as engaging in a kind of challenge, in which products from one realm are used to inform those of the other.[4] Calvino then puts his ideas into

---

[1] Calvino, 'Filosofia e letteratura', p. 193. His italics.

[2] His recognition of the status of science as *a* way of representation resembles Michel Serres's idea of passage, in which he regards science as a cultural formation leading to other kinds of cultural formations in a rhizomic, non-hierarchical structure. For more details, see Serres, *Hermès: Le Passage du nord-ouest* (Paris: Minuit, 1980), esp. pp. 15-24. For criticism of Serres's theory, see William R. Paulson, *The Noise of Culture: Literary Texts in a World of Information* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988), esp. pp. 30-52; Josué V. Harari, and David F. Bell, 'Introduction: *Journal à plusieurs voies*', in Serres, *Hermes: Literature, Science, Philosophy*, ed. by Josué V. Harari and David F. Bell (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), pp. ix-xl.

[3] For more details on the relationships between literature and science, see Gillian Beer, 'Science and Literature', in *Companion to the History of Modern Science*, ed. by R. C. Olby and others (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 783-98; N. Katherine Hayles, 'Literature and Science', in *Encyclopedia of Literature and Criticism*, ed. by Martin Coyle and others (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 1068-81. See also N. Katherine Hayles, ed., *Chaos and Order: Complex Dynamics in Literature and Science* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

[4] 'Non ci potrebbe essere nessuna coincidenza tra i due linguaggi [del discorso scientifico e del discorso letterario], ma ci può essere (proprio per la loro estrema diversità) una sfida, una scommessa tra loro' (Calvino, 'Due interviste su scienza e letteratura', in his *Saggi 1945-1985*, i, 229-37 (p. 237)). For more details of how Calvino relates science to literature, see Claude

practice in short stories collected in both *Cosmicomiche* (1965) and *T con zero* (1967), in which he aims to convert scientific ideas into comical tales. Calvino's interest in the relationship between science and literature in this period should be seen alongside his attention to the French structuralist trend,[5] especially when one considers that he begins his essay 'Due interviste su scienza e letteratura' by discussing Barthes's essay 'Science versus Literature'.[6] In addition, his affinity with the OULIPO group, one of whose aims is to link mathematics and poetry, also emerged in this period.[7]

While Calvino's writings were mainly produced towards the second half of the twentieth century, Borges wrote most of his metaphysical short stories in the 1940s, especially towards the end of the Second World War. It would not thus be far-fetched to argue that Borges was writing his stories at a time when there were still heated debates surrounding Albert Einstein's theory of relativity and its implications for morality. According to Eduardo L. Ortiz, Borges was well cognizant of such debates whilst in Europe in the early 1920s, and particularly in Buenos Aires in 1925 when Einstein visited the Argentine capital city.[8] At that time, Einstein's concepts of time and space came as a shock to the general public since they disturbed accepted notions of universal time and space, which could be traced back to Sir Isaac Newton.[9] Even though Einstein's ideas might not be understood by everyone, his reflections inspired debates and controversies,

---

Raffestin, 'Tra letteratura e scienza. Calvino o l'analista della territorialità', in *Italo Calvino: A Writer for the Next Millennium*, pp. 269-78.

[5] In 1968, for example, Calvino attended two seminars led by Barthes at the Sorbonne.

[6] Barthes, 'Science versus Literature', in *Structuralism: A Reader*, ed. by Michael Lane (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970), 410-16 (first publ. in *The Times Literary Supplement*, 28 September 1967).

[7] At the time, the OULIPO was part of the Collège de Pataphysique of Alfred Jerry. Among members of the group were George Perec, François Le Lionnais, Jacques Roubaud, and Paul Fournel. See 'Cronologia', p. LXXX. Calvino also wrote poems and other literary inventions under the influence of the OULIPO. For more details, see Calvino, 'Poesie e invenzioni oulipiennes (1962-64, 1972-83)', in *Romanzi e racconti*, iii, pp. 313-43.

[8] See Eduardo L. Ortiz, 'The Transmission of Science from Europe to Argentina and its Impact on Literature: From Lugones to Borges', in *Borges and Europe Revisited*, ed. by Evelyn Fishburn (London: Institute of Latin American Studies, University of London, 1998), pp. 108-23.

[9] For more details, see Jeremy Bernstein, *Einstein* (London: Fontana, 1973); John Stachel, 'The Theory of Relativity', in *Companion to the History of Modern Science*, pp. 442-57.

encouraging the general public to think seriously about space and time. Roger Rosenblatt argues that:

> all this has nothing to do with relativity, but it had much to do with Einstein's contemplation of relativity. Einstein became the emblem not only of the desire to know the truth but also of the capacity to know the truth.[10]

Borges was probably one of the people at that time who found himself engaged in the debates. According to Ortiz, this can be seen in one of his poems 'Líneas que pude haber escrito y perdido hacia 1922',[11] in which the narrator begins by describing a scene seemingly remote in time and space:

> Silenciosas batallas del ocaso
> en arrabales últimos,
> siempre antiguas derrotas de una guerra en el cielo,
> albas ruinosas que nos llegan
> desde el fondo desierto del espacio
> como desde el fondo del tiempo [...][12]

The description depends largely on our concepts of time and space. Words such as 'ocaso' and 'albas' denote distinctive concepts of time whereas 'arrabales' and 'derrotas' signal certain types of space. For Borges, these concepts approach us from the ends of time and space, secret areas upon which his poem centres. Towards the end of the poem, the narrator wonders to what extent such concepts constitute him and whether there will be any key to the conundrum:

---

[10] Roger Rosenblatt, 'The Age of Einstein', *Time*, 31 December 1999, 58-59 (p. 59).
[11] Borges, 'Líneas que pude haber escrito y perdido hacia 1922', in his *Obras completas 1923-1972*, p. 51 (first publ. 1923).
[12] Borges, 'Líneas que pude haber escrito y perdido hacia 1922', p. 51.

> ¿Soy yo esas cosas y las otras
> o son llaves secretas y arduas álgebras
> de lo que no sabremos nunca?[13]

Borges's feeling of uncertainty increases at the end of the poem, since he is not sure whether he will be able to know this, given his limited capacity to comprehend the universe. This tone of doubt can be cast alongside a sense of uncertainty in the general public at that time.

Calvino was also aware of the debates surrounding the theory of relativity and actively participated in the discussion.[14] He was acquainted with the theory of relativity and quantum mechanics during the war when he had a chance to discuss various topics with Eugenio Scalfari, one of his closest friends from Rome. According to Calvino:

> Si discuteva molto anche di scienza, di cosmologia, dei fondamenti della conoscenza: Eddington, Planck, Heisenberg, Einstein.[15]

As with Borges, the debates surrounding relativity and identity also led to Calvino's contemplation of the role of science in the production of knowledge. If, for Borges, science engenders a sense of uncertainty, a feeling that a key to the universe may never be discovered, Calvino deems science, especially contemporary science, an instructive aid which reminds human beings that there is no absolute knowledge, but a series of approximations to the absolute:

---

[13] Borges, 'Líneas que pude haber escrito y perdido hacia 1922', p. 51.

[14] In an essay, Calvino mentions that the theory of relativity has nothing to do with moral values. For him, relativity does not imply moral relativism since science and ethics are two different fields. See Calvino, 'Due interviste su scienza e letteratura', p. 235.

[15] Calvino, 'Autobiografia politica giovanile', in his *Saggi 1945-1985*, ii, 2733-59 (p. 2743). It should also be noted here that Calvino's parents were scientists: Mario Calvino, his father, was an agronomist and his mother, Evelina Mameli, was a botanist at the University of Pavia. See Calvino's 'Autobiografia politica giovanile', p. 2735.

> In questo momento, il modello del linguaggio matematico, della logica formale, può salvare lo scrittore dal logoramente in cui sono scadute parole e immagini per il loro falso uso. Con questo lo scrittore non deve però credere d'aver trovato qualcosa d'assoluto; anche qui può servirgli l'esempio della scienza: nella paziente modestia di considerare ogni risultato come facente parte di una serie forse infinita d'approssimazioni.[16]

For Calvino, contemporary science does not guarantee knowledge of the absolute. Instead, due to the incapacity of human beings to penetrate into the complexity of the real, it can only allow human beings to approximate the real. In other words, contemporary scientific debates can be used as a reminder of the limits of human beings in their quest for complete knowledge of absolute real.

Patterns of Knowledge Conceptualisation: Issues and their Limits

For Borges and Calvino, the development of contemporary science no longer assures human beings that a mysterious design of the universe is there to be revealed and comprehended; on the contrary, it problematises such fundamental issues as space and time as well as raising questions as to what extent human beings can understand nature. The figure of the observer becomes crucial, particularly in the act of observation and analysis. The focus can be regarded as shifting from external experiment to inward acts of cognition. The emergence of the observer in scientific discourse should be viewed alongside Foucault's notion of man in his theory of representation. For Foucault, the emphasis should be repositioned from the act of representation to the emergence of a human subject and especially his or her limitations in representational practices. Similarly, the debates surrounding contemporary science also signal a tendency towards

[16] Calvino, 'Due interviste su scienza e letteratura', p. 237.

investigation into the observer and his or her cognitive limits. Relating to the repositioning of the observer and his or her internal processes of knowledge conceptualisation, this section will discuss how the narratives of Borges and Calvino explore the observer's incapacity to render reality in its absolute form through such basic issues as reductionistic analysis, identity, objectivity, and causality.

Reductionistic Analysis

One of the main features of science is the proclivity to reduce a complex phenomenon to a set of interconnections and to exclude seemingly irrelevant elements from the picture. This can be seen from the scientist's attempt to explore the universe and break it down into smaller units. The world, for example, is made up of atoms, atoms are made up of electrons and nucleons, nucleons are made up of quarks, *ad infinitum*. The principle of analysing complex things into simple constituents is ingrained in scientific discourse, as evinced from the fact that in scientific experiments it is common for scientific researchers to look for individual factors, both variable and invariable, which affect their experiment results. Edward O. Wilson calls this reductionistic tendency in scientific discourse 'the Ionian Enchantment'[17] and sums up the trend as follows:

> The central idea of the consilience world view is that all tangible phenomena, from the birth of stars to the workings of social institutions, are based on material processes that are ultimately reducible, however long and tortuous the sequences, to the laws of physics.[18]

[17] See Edward O. Wilson, *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge* (London: Abacus, 1999; first publ. 1998), pp. 1-5.
[18] Wilson, *Consilience*, p. 297.

It should be noted here that, as Wilson is aware, reductionism is unpopular outside the scientific arena.[19] However, this does not mean that reductionism is dispensable and should be avoided: without the analytical process of modern science, of which reductionism is part and parcel, no progress can be conceived of. In fact, reductionistic analysis has been a crucial part of modern science since the latter first became a distinctive discipline in the early seventeenth century.[20] Galileo Galilei, for example, firmly believed in the concept of reductionistic analysis as he was convinced that natural phenomena could be explained by a certain set of rules; in other words, he held that 'the physical world *actually consisted of* the mathematical primary qualities and their laws, and that these laws were discoverable in detail with absolute certainty'.[21]

However, the belief in reductionism unwittingly implies a process of selection and omission. In order to find a law that can explain a natural phenomenon, one needs to look for factors that conform to a certain pattern. This drawback was long recognised, at least as far back as when it was implicit in one of Sir Isaac Newton's telling remarks made shortly before his death:

> I do not know what I may appear to the world; but to myself I seem to have been only like a boy, playing on the seashore, and diverting myself in now and then

---

[19] 'To many scholars in the social sciences and humanities it is a vampire in the sacristy. [...] As the century closes, the focus of the natural sciences has begun to shift away from the search for new fundamental laws and toward new kinds of synthesis – 'holism,' if you prefer – in order to understand complex systems' (Wilson, *Consilience*, p. 298).

[20] See Ernan McMullin, 'The Development of Philosophy of Science 1600-1900', in *Companion to the History of Modern Science*, pp. 816-37. For an etymological and cultural study of the term 'science' and its derivatives, see Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Fontana, 1988; first publ. 1976), pp. 276-80.

[21] A. C. Crombie, 'Galileo's Conception of Scientific Truth', in *Literature and Science* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1955), pp. 132-38 (p. 135). His italics. Because of this strong tendency for reductionism, Crombie labels Galileo an essentialist, who can be compared with 'Aristotle and the Averroïsts in holding that there is a literally and uniquely true physical theory, that science can discover it, and that alternative theories are consequently false' (Crombie, 'Galileo's Conception of Scientific Truth', p. 134).

> finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary while the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me.[22]

Newton's penchant for 'a smoother pebble' and 'a prettier shell' points towards the fact that his formation of scientific theory could only account for certain patterns of natural phenomena; the 'ordinary' pebbles and shells which constitute the much greater part of nature remain unaccounted for by his scientific knowledge.

The limitations of the analytical process are stressed by Borges in one of his last short stories, 'Tigres azules', in which Alexander Craigie, a Scotsman, sets out to look for 'the blue tiger' which, Craigie believes, lives near the Ganges in South Asia. It transpires that the blue tiger is not a tiger after all but blue stones that keep multiplying, defying all laws of arithmetical operations. These stones drive him insane because they can never conform to any rule which allows him to count:

> Naturalmente, las cuatro operaciones de sumar, restar, multiplicar o dividir eran imposibles. Las piedras se negaban a la aritmética y al cálculo de probabilidades. Cuarenta discos podían, divididos, dar nueve; los nueve, divididos a su vez, podían ser trescientos. No sé cuánto pesaban. No recurrí a una balanza, pero estoy seguro de que su peso era constante y leve. El color era siempre aquel azul.[23]

Counting means subjecting an entity to an understandable numerical system which downplays its other complex aspects and privileges only its quantitative

---

[22] This comment is quoted in E. N. da C. Andrade, *Isaac Newton* (London: Max Parrish, 1950), p. 102.

[23] Borges, 'Tigres azules', in his *La rosa de Paracelso. Tigres azules* (Madrid: Swan, 1986), pp. 31-72 (pp. 66-67).

side. The fact that these stones resist a numerical system also implies that they challenge any attempt to rationalise their existence. This torments the protagonist who is a firm worshipper of science, as evidenced by his description:

> El mismo anhelo de orden que en el principio creó las matemáticas hizo que yo buscara un orden en esa aberración de las matemáticas que son las insensatas piedras que engendran. En sus imprevisibles variaciones quise hallar una ley.[24]

This quotation implies that arithmetic is no longer regarded as a field of knowledge, especially when the latter connotes an attempt by man to rationalise or to make sense of natural phenomena. The fact that a phenomenon conforms to arithmetic patterns not only strengthens the success of science, it also makes one feel relieved because it means that the arithmetical patterns that one establishes are right and, therefore, can be used to predict future phenomena. Thus, one can understand why the Scotsman is deeply disturbed by these multiplying stones. If they do not increase or decrease in accordance with an existing pattern of numerical operations, it means that the pattern that people have used is no longer valid and therefore cannot be applied to future natural phenomena. It also means that human beings need to retrace their steps and start from scratch. In a way, this story can be interpreted as a parable of Newton's selective process. The numerical operations can be regarded as facilitating only 'a smoother pebble' or 'a prettier shell' in the sense that they can only be used with certain sets of natural phenomena. Nonetheless, these stones do not belong to those sets.

The yearning for reducible pattern can also be found in Calvino's narrative. In 'La corsa delle giraffe',[25] one of the Palomar short stories, Calvino describes how much Palomar is impressed with giraffes at the Vincennes zoo. For the

---

[24] Borges, 'Tigres azules', p. 65.
[25] Calvino, 'La corsa delle giraffe', in his *Romanzi e racconti*, ii, pp. 940-41 (first publ. 1975).

protagonist, the giraffe is likened to a machine in which disproportionate organs are connected in a harmonious way:

> La giraffa sembra un meccanismo costruito mettendo insieme pezzi provenienti da macchine eterogenee, ma che pur tuttavia funziona perfettamente. Il signor Palomar, continuando a osservare le giraffe in corsa, si rende conto d'una complicata armonia che comanda quel trepestio disarmonico, d'una proporzione interna che lega tra loro le più vistose sproporzioni anatomiche, d'una grazia naturale che vien fuori da quelle movenze sgraziate.[26]

Palomar's observation can be compared to that of the scientist, who observes an entity by analysing its parts. Like the protagonist in Borges's 'Tigres azules', the analytical process also has an impact upon Palomar's mind. If Craigie feels tormented because the stones do not conform to his established arithmetical pattern, Palomar feels relieved because the giraffe, for him, represents a harmonious pattern that nature offers to mankind:

> Il signor Palomar [...] si domanda il perché del suo interesse per le giraffe. Forse perché il mondo intorno a lui si muove in modo disarmonico ed egli spera sempre di scoprirvi un disegno, una costante.[27]

In sum, for both authors, the analytical process leads to the inevitable problem of reductionism, since natural phenomena are reduced to parts that constitute a whole. From the process of analysis, certain laws and principles arise, which can be used to explain and predict future phenomena. However, both Borges and Calvino suggest that perhaps a great part of our universe cannot be reduced to definite laws and principles because they are too complex to be reducible.

---

[26] Calvino, 'La corsa delle giraffe', p. 940.
[27] Calvino, 'La corsa delle giraffe', p. 941.

Identity and Objectivity

One of the reasons for this state of complexity is the intricacy of our own mind. After seeing the harmony of the giraffe's disproportionate bodily organs, Palomar goes on to juxtapose that state of perfect concord with his own complex state of mind which resists categorisation. Compared to the coordinated movements of the giraffe:

> [...] lui stesso sente di procedere spinto da moti della mente non coordinati, che sembrano non aver niente a che fare l'uno con l'altro e che è sempre più difficile far quadrare in un qualsiasi modello d'armonia interiore.[28]

Palomar's shift from his observation of outer nature to the inner workings of his mind represents one of the key tendencies of contemporary science. This represents a significant change, as it can be regarded as a direct blow to reliance upon empiricism, especially upon the belief that human participation has no influence in experimentation processes. To illustrate the situation in the scientific context, Stephen Toulmin elicits two types of scientist. First, he compares the status of the traditional scientist to that of the spectator, an analogy which is closely bound up with the traditional belief of science in a clear-cut difference between scientist as subject and nature as object.[29] Toulmin accordingly urges us to revise our subject/object polarity, claiming that 'the interaction between scientists and their objects of study is always a *two-way* affair',[30] and calling for a

---

[28] Calvino, 'La corsa delle giraffe', p. 941.

[29] Stephen Toulmin, 'The Construal of Reality: Criticism in Modern and Postmodern Science', in *The Politics of Interpretation*, ed. by W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), pp. 99-117 (p. 102). For more details on Toulmin's analysis of the model of scientist, see also Toulmin, *The Return to Cosmology: Postmodern Science and the Theory of Nature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), esp. pp. 238-53, in which he traces the scientist-as-spectator model back to the Greek notion of *theoria*, which refers to the detached intellectual posture, by contrast with the *praxis* of the carpenter, the farmer, or the fisherman, which requires direct and interactive participation.

[30] Toulmin, 'The Construal of Reality', p. 103. His italics.

second analogy, the scientist as participant, which emphasises the fact that 'the scientist must acknowledge and discount his [or her] own reactions to and influence on that which he [or she] seeks to understand'.[31] In other words, human cognition is also another part of the natural world that needs to be carefully investigated. According to Toulmin, human sensorial perception should first be thoroughly questioned before any experiment.[32] In this section, the limits of human cognition in terms of the unreliability of his or her sensorial perception will lead to an analysis of two relevant issues, identity and objectivity.

The idea of the scientist as participant implies a redefinition of the concept of identity since it undermines this concept as a fixed, stable entity whose sensorial perception can be used as a reliable measure. This debunking of fixed identity can be seen in 'Everything and Nothing',[33] where Borges discusses the psychology of a dramatist and does not tell the reader the name of William Shakespeare until the last sentence, a suspense technique that he also uses in other stories.[34] By analysing the complexity of Shakespeare's psychology, i.e. his aspiration to be someone else in his plays and his self-loathing, Borges sees in the dramatist a yearning to find his true self, the self that is not guided by his writing and his literary imagination. For Borges, the decision of the playwright to desert his prosperous writing career in London and move to his birthplace in Stratford-upon-Avon was a turning point in his life; he attributes that to the playwright's overwhelming sense of tedium in playing roles. Nevertheless, even though Shakespeare chose to be a businessman for the rest of his life, Borges also

---

[31] Toulmin, 'The Construal of Reality', p. 103.

[32] However, this also poses a complicated problem when one bears in mind that, in order to study human sensitivity, one needs to have a thorough background to the natural world. This situation leads to one of the most perplexing limits of science, i.e. 'the inevitable necessity of using one bit of the physical world to measure or investigate another bit, which is a kind of self-referentiality' (B. K. Ridley, *On Science* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 22).

[33] Borges, 'Everything and Nothing', in *Obras completas 1923-1972*, pp. 803-4 (first publ. 1940).

[34] Several stories by Borges deal with enigmas or conundrums whose answers are not to be revealed until the last line or the last sentence. These stories include 'Hombre de la esquina rosada', 'La forma de la espada', and 'La casa de Asterión'.

considers this to be another role that the playwright constructed; it is, ironically, yet another role that Shakespeare needed to perform. What this story hints at is the futility of a search for essential human identity as human identity always changes in accordance with shifts in time and space. The ending of the story reveals another bleak twist when Shakespeare encounters God after his death:

> La historia agrega que, antes o después de morir, se supo frente a Dios y le dijo: *Yo, que tantos hombres he sido en vano, quiero ser uno y yo.* La voz de Dios le contestó desde un torbellino: *Yo tampoco soy; yo soñé el mundo como tú soñaste tu obra, mi Shakespeare, y entre las formas de mi sueño estás tú, que como yo eres muchos y nadie.*[35]

Placed in a broader picture, 'Everything and Nothing' asks the reader not to take human identity for granted. It can also be seen alongside the debates surrounding contemporary science in which the figure of the observer is highlighted and no longer deemed transparent and stable, capable of studying the universe through a one-way mirror.

While the question of human identity is seriously scrutinised in 'Everything and Nothing', its complexity receives similarly rigorous analysis in 'Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius'.[36] In this story, Borges dreams an imaginary terrain populated by people who believe in an extreme branch of idealism, a creed almost diametrically opposite to ours, in which materialism is enshrined. Like 'Everything and Nothing', identity is portrayed as multiple and single at the same time since the multiplicity of people's identities comes from the singular origin of divinity: 'hay un solo sujeto, que ese sujeto indivisible es cada uno de los seres

[35] Borges, 'Everything and Nothing', p. 804. His italics.
[36] Borges, 'Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius', in his *Obras completas 1923-1972*, pp. 431-43 (first publ. 1941).

del universo y que éstos son los órganos y máscaras de la divinidad'.[37] In addition, Borges also asserts that the belief that the human subject possesses a unique, fixed sense of identity should be discarded because of the simple fact that the human subject changes through time. In 'Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius', he extends this destabilised notion of identity into the scientific context. Since the subject changes, there cannot be a valid claim that exists outside the subject's location; total objectivity is thus inevitably challenged. Moreover, because the subject always changes, there can never be any two identical events or any causal laws that can explain a series of events. This is because Tlönian people believe that '[el mundo] no es un concurso de objetos en el espacio; es una serie heterogénea de actos independientes'.[38] Borges goes on to discuss the influence this idealistic doctrine has on science:

> Este monismo o idealismo total invalida la ciencia. Explicar (o juzgar) un hecho es unirlo a otro; esa vinculación, en Tlön, es un estado posterior del sujeto, que no puede afectar o iluminar el estado anterior. Todo estado mental es irreductible: el mero hecho de nombrarlo – *id est*, de clasificarlo – importa un falseo. De ello cabría deducir que no hay ciencias en Tlön – ni siquiera razonamientos. La paradójica verdad es que existen, en casi innumerable número.[39]

According to Borges, the importance of human cognition should not be taken for granted since the human subject does not act like a passive observer, or, as Toulmin suggests, a spectator. This extreme branch of idealism affects Tlönian fields of knowledge, such as geometry: '[la geometría visual] declara que el hombre que se desplaza modifica las formas que lo circundan'.[40] Their view on

---

[37] Borges, 'Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius', p. 438.
[38] Borges, 'Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius', p. 435.
[39] Borges, 'Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius', p. 436. His italics.
[40] Borges, 'Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius', p. 438.

arithmetic is also affected: 'Afirman [los hombres de Tlön] que la operación de contar modifica las cantidades y las convierte de indefinidas en definidas'.[41] If arithmatic in 'Tigres azules' is regarded as ineffectual in its attempt to help man understand the universe, its capacity to alter reality is highlighted in Tlön. From these Tlönian examples, human involvement is seen to change scientific results of their experiments, resulting in objective absolutes becoming unreachable. It can thus be argued that Tlönian practice challenges the claim to objectivity in knowledge conceptualisation as well as acknowledging the complexity of cognition.

If Borges's narrative stresses the significant role played by human mediation in any act of knowledge conceptualisation and questions the notions of fixed identity and absolute objectivity, that of Calvino acknowledges and even celebrates the destabilisation of identity. In his comical tales collected in the *Cosmicomiche* series, he creates the anthropomorphic protagonist, Qfwfq, who tries to make sense of various situations. Like the dramatist in Borges's 'Everything and Nothing', Qfwfq by no means possesses a fixed identity. His personal traits change from story to story: in 'Lo zio acquatico',[42] for instance, Qfwfq is one of the first vertebrates who starts to abandon aquatic life for a terrestial one, whereas in 'I dinosauri'[43] he becomes an eponymous hero. In other stories, such as 'Un segno nello spazio',[44] 'Senza colori',[45] and 'Tutto in un punto',[46] Qfwfq remains an unidentified creature exploring emerging and unstable territories. That the protagonist of these short stories is such a protean character can not only be interpreted as a challenge to storytelling, but it also bespeaks Calvino's questioning of the idea of fixed narrative identity. Like

[41] Borges, 'Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius', p. 438.
[42] Calvino, 'Lo zio acquatico', in his *Romanzi e racconti*, ii, 142-53 (first publ. 1965).
[43] Calvino, 'I dinosauri', in his *Romanzi e racconti*, ii, 164-81 (first publ. 1965).
[44] Calvino, 'Un segno nello spazio', in his *Romanzi e racconti*, ii, 108-17 (first publ. 1964).
[45] Calvino, 'Senza colori', in his *Romanzi e racconti*, ii, 124-34 (first publ. 1965).
[46] Calvino, 'Tutto in un punto', in his *Romanzi e racconti*, ii, 118-23 (first publ. 1964).

Borges, he finds the narrative voice essentially unstable, as JoAnn Cannon argues:

> his changing form [...] reminds us that the name [Qfwfq] is in fact pure convention. The thematic devices unmask the absence of a stable sign or *persona* in the text. [...] Qfwfq's many reincarnations do not mask a person (the living author, for instance); rather the proliferation of masks reveals the absence of a personal grounding of the text.[47]

Whilst exposing the reader to the multiplicity of the narrative voice, Calvino takes issue with its limits at the same time. By assigning human traits to the narrative voice, i.e. giving Qfwfq ability to think, rationalise, and dream like human beings, the author questions whether the narrative voice can be totally objective. Like the extreme branch of idealism that the Tlönians believe, Qfwfq's anthropomorphic traits, despite his protean forms, challenge the possibility of absolute objectivity. In an interview, Calvino thinks that any attempt to escape from anthropomorphism is ineffectual as it is part of the human condition:

> [...] io questo *antropomorfismo* l'ho accettato e rivendicato in pieno come procedimento letterario fondamentale, e – prima che letterario – mitico, collegato a una della prime spiegazioni del mondo dell'uomo primitivo, l'*animismo*. [...] é successo che poi scrivendo mi é venuto da seguire la via opposta, con dei racconti che sono una specie di delirio dell'antropomorfismo, dell'impossibilità di pensare il mondo se non attraverso figure umane, o più particolarmente smorfie umane, borbottii umani.[48]

[47] JoAnn Cannon, *Italo Calvino: Writer and Critic*, pp. 52-55. Her italics.
[48] Calvino, 'Due interviste su scienza e letteratura', pp. 233-34. His italics.

For Calvino, anthromorphism is unavoidable when it comes to writing fiction, no matter how much the author tries to create a form of protagonist other than human. This can be linked to our analysis of knowledge conceptualisation, especially to the realisation that we cannot escape from the mediate intervention of our human mind. Like Borges, Calvino highlights such mediation and its active role in constructing cultural structures, be they literary or scientific.

For both authors, as the human mind is the central place where the rationalisation of experience is made possible, its investigation is stressed in their narratives. In 'Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius', for example, we learn that 'no es exagerado afirmar que la cultura clásica de Tlön comprende una sola disciplina: la psicología. Las otras están subordinadas a ella'.[49] Likewise, for Calvino, the focus on mental analysis occupies a prominent place in one of his last publications, *Palomar*. The title of this work may remind the reader of the Observatory at the Mount Palomar in the United States[50] or the Spanish word *palomar* which means a dovecote. Nonetheless, for Calvino, it points towards the Italian word *palombaro* (a diver):

> Il nome Palomar mi piaceva per il simbolo e anche per il suono. C'è il problema di come pronunciarlo: gli americani dicono Pàlomar, ma essendo un termine di origine spagnola mi sembra più giusto dire Palomàr. Significa colombaia, e questo col libro non c'entra. A me, la prima associazione di parole che fa venire in mente è il palombaro: il personaggio è come un palombaro che s'immerga nella superficie.[51]

---

[49] Borges, 'Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius', p. 436.

[50] Calvino acknowledges this fact in one of the Palomar short stories, 'L'occhio e i pianeti', stating that 'Il signor Palomar, forse perché porta lo stesso nome d'un famoso osservatorio, gode di qualche amicizia tra gli astronomi [...]' (Calvino, 'L'occhio e i pianeti', in his *Romanzi e racconti*, ii, 904-8 (p. 904)).

[51] Quoted in Francesca Serra, *Calvino e il pulviscolo di Palomar* (Florence: Le Lettere, 1996), p. 92.

Palomar, which is also the name of the protagonist of this series of short stories, is a man who sets out to explore the world and, like a diver, tries to go beyond the surface and investigate the essence of the real underneath. Palomar attempts to explore the world by trying to be objective; by trying to render himself transparent, he hopes that he might be able to perceive the real in its original state. However, Palomar's project is doomed to failure as his search for the real is complicated by the issue of human cognition:

> Ma come si fa a guardare qualcosa lasciando da parte l'io? Di chi sono gli occhi che guardano? Di solito si pensa che l'io sia uno che sta affacciato ai propri occhi come al davanzale d'una finestra e guarda il mondo che si distende in tutta la sua vastità lì davanti a lui. Dunque: c'è una finestra che s'affaccia sul mondo. Di là c'è il mondo; e di qua? Sempre il mondo: cos'altro volete che ci sia?[52]

Palomar's contemplation in 'Il mondo guarda il mondo' is interesting because it shows how the protagonist begins to question the transparency of his cognitive processes and realises that they are also part of the world that need rigorous investigation. If one follows Palomar's argument, the concept of fixed identity is severely undermined:

> E lui, detto anche 'io', cioè il signor Palomar? Non è anche lui un pezzo di mondo che sta guardando un altro pezzo di mondo? Oppure, dato che c'è mondo di qua e mondo di là della finestra, forse l'io non è altro che la finestra attraverso la quale il mondo guarda il mondo.[53]

[52] Calvino, 'Il mondo guarda il mondo', in his *Romanzi e racconti*, ii, 968-70 (pp. 968-69).
[53] Calvino, 'Il mondo guarda il mondo', p. 969.

Like Borges, what Calvino implies here is the fact that human perception is not as transparent as it seems; human cognition is also a constitutive part of reality and thus cannot be totally excluded from any act of representation. In other words, it is an indispensable part of knowledge production.

Causality

Both authors perceive the importance of the role of the human mind and how they challenge the privileging of the object of study over human cognition. As Calvino implies in 'Il mondo guarda il mondo', these issues are complicated in the sense that human cognition cannot be analysed on its own since it is also part of the natural world. By aligning their narratives with these lines of thought, Borges and Calvino indicate one of the main paradoxes that hovers about the complexity of the processes of knowledge conceptualisation. Furthermore, if the human mind occupies a major place in the construction of reality, what we perceive as reality may be derived from the workings of our inner self. This idealistic premise leads both authors to question the paradigm of causal connections that is believed to be extant in nature, prior to human conceptualisation.

As we have seen, in 'Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius', Borges describes the Tlönian philosophical epistemology, which is based on an extreme branch of idealism (i.e. the belief that everything is generated from the mind). In the wake of the Tlönian belief, it is not surprising that the doctrine of materialism, the belief that reality lies outside the human mind, is criticised because it assumes that objects have duration in time and thus occupy particular places, regardless of our cognition and perception. For Tlönian people, objects do not exist outside their perception and any continuation of their existence without human perception is deemed impossible. Therefore, the laws of causality are found to be unsustainable in Tlön, as it presupposes that, whether we perceive it or not, every

object and every event undergoes temporal progression and is engaged in deterministic interrelationships. Tlönian people, therefore, consider causal laws to be what they call 'association of ideas':

> La percepción de una humareda en el horizonte y después del campo incendiado y después del cigarro a medio apagar que produjo la quemazón es considerada un ejemplo de asociación de ideas.[54]

This belief resembles David Hume's idea of the construction of causality in reality. For Hume, the concept of causality is closely linked with that of identity. If the concept of continuing identity is proved to be false, the laws of causality are undermined as well; this is because these laws presuppose the continuing identity of objects and events:

> We readily suppose an object may continue individually the same, tho' several times absent from and present to the senses; and ascribe to it an identity, notwithstanding the interruption of the perception, whenever we conclude, that if we had kept our eye or hand constantly upon it, it would have convey'd an invariable and uninterrupted perception. But this conclusion beyond the impressions of our senses can be founded only on the connexion of *cause and effect*; nor can we otherwise have any security, that the object is not chang'd upon us, however much the new object may resemble that which was formerly present to the senses.[55]

Following Hume's argument, one sees how important it is for Borges to deconstruct our concept of identity and then proceed to debunk our causal laws since, without the notion of fixed identity, causal laws cannot be sustained.

---

[54] Borges, 'Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius', p. 436.
[55] David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. by Ernest C. Mossner (London: Penguin, 1984; first publ. 1739), p. 122. His italics.

Another challenge to the laws of causality can be found in 'Emma Zunz'.[56] The eponymous character receives a letter saying that her father has passed away. Her father, Emanuel Zunz, has been living in Brazil under the name Manuel Maier because he was accused of funds embezzlement at the Tarbuch & Loewenthal weaving mill, where Emma Zunz is working. Before departing for Brazil, Emanuel confided in Emma that Aaron Loewenthal, who is Emma's current boss, was the real thief. After receiving the letter, Emma feels devastated: 'Su primera impresión fue de malestar en el vientre y en las rodillas; luego de ciega culpa, de irrealidad, de frío, de temor; luego, quiso ya estar en el día siguiente'.[57] She recalls her childhood, which she enjoyed with her parents, before the accusation drove their family apart. By that night she has conceived of a plan to take revenge for her father. She goes to work as usual on the next day and does not let anyone know of her father's death. According to the narrative, no one suspects any change in her personality as she goes about her daily life at work. As a pacifist, Emma declares that she opposes any form of violence and will not join a strike, the rumours of which are building up in the factory. On Saturday, she phones Loewenthal that she needs to talk to him in private that night, insinuating that she has some news in regard to the strike. Loewenthal agrees to meet her in his office.

It is at this point that the narrative becomes increasingly complex. Emma reads a newspaper and finds out that a Scandinavian ship is to weigh anchor that night. After finishing her work on Saturday, she goes down to the docks, where there are many places of ill repute. She steps into two or three bars and finally agrees to sleep with a man, probably a sailor from the Scandinavian ship.[58] When Emma is

[56] Borges, 'Emma Zunz', in his *Obras completas 1923-1972*, pp. 564-68 (first publ. 1948).
[57] Borges, 'Emma Zunz', p. 564.
[58] Borges also hints at Emma's replaying of the sexual scene she might have seen between her parents and her attempt at taking revenge might therefore be interpreted as a simultaneous vindication for the sexual violation of her mother. For more details, see Bella Brodzki, "She was

alone again, she looks at the money that the man has left for her. She tears the money into pieces and then goes to see Loewenthal in his office. While Loewenthal is getting her a glass of water, Emma looks for a revolver that she believes he keeps in one of his drawers. She manages to find it and fires at Loewenthal when he comes back. Calling the police, Emma's pretext for killing him is:

> *Ha ocurrido una cosa que es increíble ... El señor Loewenthal me hizo venir con el pretexto de la huelga ... Abusó de mí, lo maté ...*[59]

Even though the excuse is in a way a manipulation of facts, it is convincing because Emma has indeed been sexually violated and, as a result, her emotion is real. What makes the case different is that Loewenthal is not the person who has committed the violation, but an unknown sailor whom Emma chooses on purpose. At any rate, Emma fulfils her aim: she manages to take revenge for her father by killing the man who once destroyed her family.

What is interesting in 'Emma Zunz' is not only Emma's complicated revenge scheme, but the shifts in the causal laws throughout the course of the narrative. The outrage that propels her to kill Loewenthal is not singularly caused by her father's death. For Emma, it is difficult to use the death as the only cause to drive her to shoot her boss. Her father has been living far from her for a long time; therefore, their intimacy might not be as strong as it seems to be. The fact that her father's death is only communicated via a piece of paper increases a sense of unreality; it makes his death almost like a dream, which cannot be easily

---

unable not to think': Borges' 'Emma Zunz' and the Female Subject', *Modern Language Notes*, 100 (1985), 330-47; and Juan Duchesne Winter, 'Después de la pérdida de la justicia. Una lectura zizekiana de 'Emma Zunz'', *Variaciones Borges*, 10 (2000), 185-202.

[59] Borges, 'Emma Zunz', p. 568. His italics.

proven.[60] How can she carry out her plan if she cannot feel that his death is real? Thus, Emma needs to make it seem real to her. She needs to find another substituting cause that drives her to consummate her plot. In this case, she needs to be sexually violated so that her anger is intensified and, in a sense, made real.[61] Having been violated by an anonymous sailor, she feels an emotional outrage that is strong enough for her to take revenge:

> Ante Aarón Loewenthal, más que la urgencia de vengar a su padre, Emma sintió la de castigar el ultraje padecido por ello. No podía no matarlo, después de esa minuciosa deshonra.[62]

By identifying Loewenthal with the sailor, Emma cannot stop herself from killing him. The cause of the murder is shifted: it is no longer revenge for her father so much as for her own dignity. However, the effect is the same: Loewenthal is dead and the double causes of her revenge are justified. The shift in revenge causes can be seen as a paradox: while it emphasises the efficacy of, as well as the need for, a cause, it also represents a challenge to causal laws, in the sense that human beings sometimes create certain causes to justify certain effects, without letting the laws run by their own deterministic course. Emma cannot let her revenge plot fail simply because she cannot feel that her father's death is real; therefore, she needs to generate a more immediate substitute cause to justify her action. As the Tlönians believe, causal laws are shown here to be partially a human construct.

---

[60] The sense of unreality that clouds her father's death is extensively analysed in Beatriz Sarlo, 'El saber del cuerpo. A propósito de 'Emma Zunz'', *Variaciones Borges*, 7 (1999), 231-47. Sarlo asserts that Emma's treatment of the situation is in excess: 'Emma lee la carta *in exceso*, interpretándola a la luz de una historia que, para ella, es la única verdadera. [...] El exceso conduce a la hiperinterpretación: la carta le dice a Emma más de lo que está escrito efectivamente en ella' (p. 233).

[61] Carter Wheelock argues that Emma lets her body be violated because she needs to assume the disgraced status of her father. I think Wheelock's argument is partially right but he still disregards the sense of unreality of the whole situation, especially the fact that Emma is driven to perpetrate the revenge simply because of a letter, the content of which is not guaranteed to be right. For Wheelock's argument, see his *The Mythmaker: A Study of Motif and Symbol in the Short Stories of Jorge Luis Borges* (Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1969), pp. 139-43.

[62] Borges, 'Emma Zunz', p. 567.

This reading is supported by the strange description of the scene of Emma's encounter with the sailor, which she uses to create her own constructed cause:

> Los hechos graves están fuera del tiempo, ya porque en ellos el pasado inmediato queda como tronchado del porvenir, ya porque no parecen consecutivas las partes que los forman.[63]

The keyword here is 'consecutivas'. The event is portrayed as not 'consecutive' with the rest of the events in the story which happen in the course of deterministic time. Emma's intervention in the deterministic laws of causality marks this encounter as 'inconsecutive' because it does not happen within the 'natural' framework of causal laws. It happens because Emma wills it to happen. Borges, by allowing Emma to participate in the seemingly pre-determined causal laws, casts the legitimacy of such laws into doubt and brings up a bleak question: what if causal laws are only a human construct?[64]

If 'Emma Zunz' strives to problematise the issue of causality by showing how much human beings play a part in it, Borges's 'Deutsche Requiem'[65] also challenges our capacity to examine it. Like 'Emma Zunz', the story does not question the validity of causal laws; however, unlike 'Emma Zunz', it displays the helpless entrapment of human beings within the ironclad chains of cause and effect. The protagonist, Otto Dietrich zur Linde, is sentenced to death because of

---

[63] Borges, 'Emma Zunz', p. 566.

[64] Rodríguez Monegal's reading of the story confirms my thesis that Borges attempts to deconstruct the essentialist attitude people have towards causal laws. For Rodríguez Monegal, identity is the central focus of the story: '[Emma Zunz] had been raped; the identity of the rapist (and the fact that she consented willingly) was irrelevant. What matters is the fact that an action committed by one man can be atoned for by another. It is the identity between men, not the differences in their personalities and individual acts, that is the real subject of the story' (Rodríguez Monegal, *Jorge Luis Borges: A Literary Biography*, p. 411). As we have seen, the issue of identity, along with that of causality, has a close affinity with our cognitive process. If the first issue of identity is deconstructed, that of causality is likely to fall into the same plight.

[65] Borges, 'Deutsches Requiem', in his *Obras completas 1923-1972*, pp. 576-81 (first publ. 1949).

his involvement in a concentration camp during the Second World War. However, he neither lies on oath nor repents his sin.[66] In his reflective soliloquy, he asserts:

> *Me satisface la derrota, porque secretamente me sé culpable y sólo puede redimirme el castigo.* [...] *Me satisface la derrota, porque es un fin y yo estoy muy cansado.* [...] *Me satisface la derrota, porque ha ocurrido, porque está innumerablemente unida a todos los hechos que son, que fueron; que serán, porque censurar o deplorar un solo hecho real es blasfemar del universo.*[67]

Zur Linde's statement bespeaks his own belief in the doctrine of predestination, the belief that God has already destined the fate of all human beings before their birth. It implies that the chains of cause and effect, therefore, can neither be broken nor altered. According to the story, it is not zur Linde's fault that he works for Nazis or kills innocent people in the concentration camp; it is rather his luckless destiny that ordains him to perpetrate his tragic course of action.[68] The moral of the story does not lie in the horror that the protagonist inflicts upon the innocent so much as in the helplessness of zur Linde against the will of God, whose indecipherable design takes the form of impenetrable laws of causality.

Calvino also addresses the complex state of causal law, albeit in a different aspect: the complexity of events building up into uncountable chains of interconnections somehow prevents us from recognising accurate causal chains.

---

[66] There is a strongly religious subtext of the story, given the fact that Borges begins the story by quoting the section of Job from the Bible. For more details, see Ramsey Lawrence, 'Religious Subtext and Narrative Structure in Borges' 'Deutsches Requiem'', *Variaciones Borges*, 10 (2000), 119-38.

[67] Borges, 'Deutsches Requiem', p. 580. His italics.

[68] For Jaime Alazraki, zur Linde's destiny can also be interpreted as an analogy to that of Germany in the sense that they live and fight for their ideal, the condition of which is their own destruction. See Alazraki, *La prosa narrative de Jorge Luis Borges: temas – estilo*, 2nd edn (Madrid: Gredos, 1983; first publ. 1974), pp. 116-21.

This can be seen in one of the *Palomar* short stories, 'La pantofola spaiata',[69] in which Palomar travels to an Eastern country and buys a pair of slippers in a bazaar. It transpires that one slipper is bigger than the other. This triggers off Palomar's contemplation: he wonders what will happen to the other person who gets the mismatched pair. His new slippers become a cause which can set off a series of effects. The other slipper may lie undiscovered in the pile until a careless customer comes to buy it and, like him, gets the mismatched pair; the other slipper lying in wait is like an effect resulting from the carelessness of both the vendor and the customer, waiting to be discovered. However, the effect may take years or it may forever lie hidden:

> Solo con un acquirente distratto come lui può verificarsi un errore, ma possono passare secoli prima che le conseguenze di questo errore si ripercuotano su un altro frequentatore di quell'antico bazar. Ogni processo di disgregazione dell'ordine del mondo è irreversibile, ma gli effetti vengono nascosti e ritardati dal pulviscolo dei grandi numeri che contiene possibilità praticamente illimitate di nuove simmetrie, combinazioni, appaiamenti.[70]

What Calvino indicates here is the inscrutability of causal laws, given the complexity and infinity of events happening in our world. Like a slipper lying in wait in a pile, an effect may be delayed until a long time after it has taken place. Alternatively, it can happen that Palomar's mismatched pair is an effect of a long-delayed cause: another person years ago might have bought a mismatched slipper, causing Palomar to have the mismatched pair at the present time.

---

[69] Calvino, 'La pantofola spaiata', in his *Romanzi e racconti*, ii, 958-59 (first publ. 1975).
[70] Calvino, 'La pantofola spaiata', p. 959. The idea of irreversible time and the capacity of the universe to organise itself in different forms of symmetries are explored in Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers, *Order out of Chaos: Man's New Dialogue with Nature* (London: Flamingo, 1985). Calvino also discussed the French edition of this work. See 'Ilya Prigogine e Isabelle Stengers, *La nuova alleanza*', in his *Saggi 1945-1985*, ii, 2038-44 (first publ. 1980).

Another case in which causality is shown to be too difficult to determine appears in 'Quanto scommettiamo',[71] a story included in Calvino's *Le Cosmicomiche*. In this story, Qfwfq wagers with Dean (k)yK, predicting whether certain events are going to happen. While Qfwfq, progressive as he is, bets on the possibility of the occurrence of certain events, Dean (k)yK chooses to bet against it. It happens that the more Qfwfq bets, the more he perceives patterns in nature:

> Così, dai dati di cui disponevo, provavo a dedurre mentalmente altri dati, e da questi altri ancora, finché non riuscivo a proporre eventualità che in apparenza non c'entravano per niente con quello di cui stavamo discutendo.[72]

Qfwfq thus begins to learn the deductive method, which bases itself on the system of causality. However, he does not stop there; his daring nature makes him favour the inductive method, which enables him to predict future eventualities with limited present data. Apart from that he also likes to predict effects, the causes of which are separated by a longer period of time, thereby making the betting more difficult and more challenging. Qfwfq begins to lose, without knowing why: 'Eppure io i miei calcoli li avevo seguiti fino in fondo, non avevo trascurato nessuna componente. Anche avessi dovuto tornare da capo, avrei riscommesso come prima'.[73] As the universe becomes increasingly complicated, Qfwfq realises that, even though the laws of causality still operate, the overwhelming number of events prevents his reasoning faculty from working effectively. It should be noted that the interminable progression of events that invalidates Qfwfq's reasoning is compared to the image of a newpaper, in which events are translated into blocks of words, devoid of a sense of their external circumstances in reality:

---

[71] Calvino, 'Quanto scommettiamo', in his *Romanzi e racconti*, ii, 154-63 (first publ. 1965).
[72] Calvino, 'Quanto scommettiamo', p. 158.
[73] Calvino, 'Quanto scommettiamo', p. 161.

> [...] adesso gli avvenimenti vengono giù ininterrotti, come una colata di cemento, uno in colonna sull'altro, uno incastrato nell'altro, separati da titoli neri e incongrui, leggibili per più versi ma intrinsecamente illeggibili, una pasta d'avvenimenti senza forma né direzione, che circonda sommerge schiaccia ogni ragionamento.[74]

Instead of being classified and digested by newspapers, contemporary events are made more complicated owing to their endless number, which defies any attempt at categorisation.

Even though both authors address the limits of the laws of causality in different aspects, they do so from similar standpoints. If Borges challenges causal law because it is partially a product of the human mind (as in Tlön's case) and also partially influenced by human will to change it (as in Emma Zunz's case), it does not mean that he challenges the efficiency and validity of causal laws. Like Borges, Calvino does not negate the status of causal laws, believing that the doctrine of causation is still valid and can be used to explain natural phenomena. However, problems arise when one tries to predict effects since human cognition is not able to handle and register the infinite number of events that have happened in the universe and distill definite causes, hence the bleak picture of predestination Borges portrays in 'Deutsche Requiem' and the playful meditation of Palomar on his mismatched pair of slippers. In addition, the separation of cause and effect by a long period of time also deters human beings from working out causal chains correctly.[75]

---

[74] Calvino, 'Quanto scommettiamo', p. 163.

[75] Calvino's idea bears striking resemblance to Edward Lorenz's notion of the butterfly effect, which becomes one of the main branches of chaos theory. For Lorenz, classical science needs to acknowledge that 'given an *approximate* knowledge of a system's initial conditions and an understanding of natural law, one can calculate the *approximate* behaviour of the system' (James Gleick, *Chaos: Making a New Science* (London: Vintage, 1998), p. 15). The butterfly effect stresses our incapability to determine or predict future eventualities, especially the weather, since we can never fully realise the *total* initial conditions of an event. The name of the butterfly effect comes from Lorenz's premise whether the flap of a butterfly's wings in Brazil today may make

The narratives of Borges and Calvino, as we have seen, debunk the mythical status of objective knowledge by exposing the reader to the rather shaky foundation upon which the production of knowledge bases itself. Reductionistic analysis, identity, objectivity, and the doctrine of causation need to be looked at in a new light: that of active intervention of human cognition at every level of interrogation.[76] Placed in a wider picture, this repositioning of cognition in the processes of knowledge conceptualisation can be seen to affect our notion of representation as a whole. The conviction that representation is believed to be an attempt to reproduce the real in an objective manner without any distortion or influence on the part of the person involved is seen to be impossible. The representation of the real always involves the creator, no matter how passive he or she would like to be. In this aspect, their narratives can be related to what Ihab Hassan calls 'immanence':

> Immanence is indeed implicit in the farthest reaches of dispersal, the dispersal of signs, the extension of consciousness. It has become, quite unmetaphysically, the quality of all expanding semiotic systems, including literature.[77]

---

the difference between calm weather and a tornado in Texas next month. Gleick traces this idea to a paper entitled 'Predictability: Does the Flap of a Butterfly's Wings in Brazil Set Off a Tornado in Texas?', which Lorenz delivered at the 1979 annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. For more details, see Gleick, *Chaos*, pp. 9-31; Garnett P. Williams, *Chaos Theory Tamed* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1997), pp. 211-19.

[76] To a certain extent, the two authors, it can be argued, open up a philosophical topic that has a direct relationship with science: the difference between 'the world as it is' and 'the world as it is perceived'. In science, these two concepts have been developed into two fields of knowledge: 'natural science' and 'human science', with their difference in foci. While natural science stresses the priority of the natural world, deeming that all mental and spiritual realities are grounded in physical, material realities, human science privileges the role of the cognitive processes of human beings. While our conception of science has long been shaped by the epistemic and ontological priority of natural science, human science has been relatively unpopular. By emphasising the importance of human cognition in their narratives, Borges and Calvino question the privileging of the concept of natural science that belies the development of modern science and ask us to revise the rather disparaged status of human science. For more details on the differences between human science and natural science, see Charles Harvey, 'Natural Science Is Human Science. Human Science Is Natural Science: Never the Twain Shall Meet', in *Continental and Postmodern Perspectives in the Philosophy of Science*, ed. by Babette E. Babich, Debra B. Bergoffen, and Simon V. Glynn (Aldershot: Avebury, 1995), pp. 121-36.

[77] Ihab Hassan, *The Postmodern Turn*, p. 76.

For Hassan, immanence signals the pervasiveness of being and consciousness in every act of construing natural phenomena. In other words, while the absolute gives way to the provisional, the mediation of human beings in knowledge production is seen as necessary, if not unavoidable. In the light of immanence, the concept of representation needs to be redefined. Instead of being regarded as a mimetic correspondence of two entities, a representational practice becomes a highly complex activity that involves the third party: the human subject. Following this line, Linda Hutcheon considers that an analysis of representation should particularly focus on the aspect of such human involvement:

> a study of representation becomes, not a study of mimetic mirroring or subjective projecting, but an exploration of the way in which narratives and images structure how we see ourselves and how we construct our notions of self, in the present and in the past.[78]

Representation is thus no longer an analysis of how much the universe is reflected mimetically, it is rather how human beings project their self-constructed perceptions onto the universe. This can be compared to Borges's belief that:

> Un hombre se propone la tarea de dibujar el mundo. A lo largo de los años puebla un espacio con imágenes de provincias, de reinos, de montañas, de bahías, de naves, de islas, de peces, de habitaciones, de instrumentos, de astros, de caballos y de personas. Poco antes de morir, descubre que ese paciente laberinto de líneas traza la imagen de su cara.[79]

---

[78] Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, p. 7.
[79] Borges, 'Epílogo al *Hacedor*', in his *Obras completas 1923-1972*, p. 854 (first publ. 1960).

Borges's statement of a man trapped in his own labyrinth can be related to Hassan's concept of immanence and Hutcheon's theory of representation in the sense that Borges's writer who sets out to describe the universe realises that his attempts to construe it are nothing but his own constructions; these constructions do not reveal characteristics of that universe so much as those of its creator. This is because the universe does not have any deterministic meaning awaiting discoveries, but countless meanings, all equally valid depending upon angles from which human beings view it. Therefore, an analysis of representation leads to a study of interpretation and, unwittingly, of the mind of the person who executes an interpretative act. This return to the self and consciousness is also fostered by Calvino:

> Qualcuno potrà obiettare che più l'opera tende alla moltiplicazione dei possibili più s'allontana da quell'unicum che è il *self* di chi scrive, la sincerità interiore, la scoperta della propria verità. Al contrario, rispondo, chi siamo noi, chi è ciascuno di noi se non una combinatoria d'esperienze, d'informazioni, di letture, d'immaginazioni? Ogni vita è un'enciclopedia, una biblioteca, un inventario d'oggetti, un campionario di stili, dove tutto può essere continuamente rimescolato e riordinato in tutti i modi possibili.[80]

For Calvino, a narrative which aims to portray the multiplicity of reality cannot avoid the immanence of consciousness, as it figures as part of the patterns of knowledge conceptualisation. It can thus be argued that both Borges and Calvino problematise the relationship between the self and the world and challenge the polarisation of the two entities, as any knowledge of the universe always presupposes interference and manipulation by human cognition.

---

[80] Calvino, *Lezioni americane*, p. 733. His italics.

Chance and Pattern

We have seen earlier how the human mind engages in representational practices. The aforementioned issues that constitute the patterns of knowledge are crucial in that they enable human beings to conceptualise and produce knowledge. In other words, such patterns are what make representational practices possible in the first place. Nevertheless, the irony is that these patterns not only facilitate but mediate and influence the production of knowledge. Chance as an external factor will be the main focus of this part as it disrupts these patterns. We will first analyse the role of chance in the narratives of the two authors, as well as identifying the different attitudes both authors have towards chance before going on to discuss the significance of pattern.

In the domains of science and philosophy, chance has long been an object of study but was regarded with rather insufficient consideration by scientists and scholars in earlier periods. According to David Ruelle, chance fascinated such thinkers as Blaise Pascal, Pierre Fermat, Christiaan Huygens, and Jacques Bernoulli, but its specific field, the calculus of probabilities, was long considered to be a minor branch of mathematics.[81] This is because chance is viewed as subversive: it is an element that disrupts determinism; it frustrates any attempt to find a pattern to describe natural phenomena as its emergence defies fixed laws and paradigms. To understand the concept and value of chance better, it is worthwhile to introduce another element that lies at the heart of contemporary science, i.e. noise. Noise is an umbrella concept that is privileged because of its disruptive nature. Michel Serres proposes its definition as follows:

> Noise is not a phenomenon, all phenomena separate from it, figures on a ground, as a light in the fog, as any message, cry, call, signal must each separate

[81] David Ruelle, *Chance and Chaos* (London: Penguin, 1993; first publ. 1991), p. 5.

> from the hubbub that fills the silence, just to be, to be perceived, sensed, known exchanged. As soon as there is a phenomenon, it leaves noise, as soon as an appearance arises, it does so by masking the noise. Thus it is not phenomenology but being itself.[82]

For Serres, human beings do not conceptualise their existence and their surroundings in an empty space, devoid of meaning and substance. On the contrary, the background within which, and the channels through which, they rationalise are full of noise. Noise therefore lies at the centre of representational practices, functioning as a repressed foundation which makes possible any reproduction of the real. Serres reverses the part noise plays in nature: instead of being marginalised, noise becomes the main background within which both nature and our cognition are shaped. However, more often than not, noise is denied and the deterministic patterns of knowledge production that downplay the role of noise are overemphasised. This imbalance leads to the unheralded emergence of noise that can challenge the validity of such patterns.

Placed in this picture, chance is regarded as part of the noisy background, prompt to disrupt deterministic patterns that are imposed upon the universe. In 'Chance, Complexity, and Narrative Explanation',[83] William Paulson distinguishes between two modes of explanation, the algorithmic and the narrative, loosely based on our conventional divides between scientific and literary discourses. The development of the algorithmic explanation, like that of classical science, centres around the use of pattern, which is derived from the repetitive occurrence of events in a recognisable scheme. This leads to the notion of predictability that characterises the algorithmic. The narrative mode, by contrast, emphasises the unpredictable or the random; it is established from the fact that events are not

[82] Serres, 'Noise', trans. by Lawrence R. Schehr, *SubStance*, 40 (1983), 48-60 (p. 50). The main work of his that discusses the emergence of noise is *Le Parasite* (Paris: Grasset, 1980).
[83] The essay is published in *SubStance*, 74 (1994), 5-21.

repeated in any perceivable pattern. Therefore, it is 'the mode of understanding appropriate to a largely open, contingent, unpredictable world'.[84] The algorithmic mode of explanation is a long-established route that classical scientific discourse traditionally adopts, whereas the narrative is a mode of comprehension mainly developed for an open world, full of random, unpredictable events. It privileges the role of chance that occurs in a communicative process.

The narratives of Borges and Calvino are, in a sense, also celebrations of chance and border on Paulson's notion of the narrative explanation. Borges's 'El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan'[85] can be read as a testimony to the emergence of chance in the universe. The plot of the story is, according to Borges, inspired by a real historical text, Liddell Hart's *The History of the World War*, as evidenced in the introductory paragraph.[86] However, the historical framework is not only used to set the tone of the story, it is also used as a pattern which unpredictable chance disrupts. According to Hart, torrential rains were the reason why British divisions delayed their offensive against the Serre-Montauban line for five days. Yet, for Borges, a story told by Dr Yu Tsun subverts Hart's version of history, breaking the causal pattern that Hart uses to explain the World War. For Yu Tsun, the delay was caused by his successful communication to the Germans about the town where the British stored their artillery. The communication would not have been successful had Yu Tsun not found and killed a man whose name exactly corresponded to that of the town: Albert. Finding the name of the victim and Yu Tsun in the newspaper, the Germans were able to bomb the town, causing the British to defer sending weapons to mount the offensive. Yu Tsun's discovery of Albert's name can be regarded as a mere chance, something that cannot be

---

[84] Paulson, 'Chance, Complexity, and Narrative Explanation', p. 9.
[85] Borges, 'El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan', in his *Obras completas 1923-1972*, pp. 472-80 (first publ. 1941).
[86] For more details on the historical background to the story, see Daniel Balderston, *Out of Context: Historical Reference and the Representation of Reality in Borges* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993), esp. pp. 39-55.

prophesied. Yet, this contingency became an important event in the subsequent chains of cause and effect, since it enabled the Germans to bomb the secret location. Borges's story therefore confirms Paulson's theory of the narrative explanation, in which the unpredictable is privileged and has an important function in constructing another level of meaning.

The chance encounter between Yu Tsun and the victim not only enabled the former to communicate the secret to the Germans, as the unlucky person, Stephen Albert, also happened to be a sinologist who was interested in the work of Yu Tsun's ancestor, Ts'ui Pen. The work was called *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*, 'una novela que fuera todavía más populosa que el *Hung Lu Meng*'.[87] For Albert, 'el libro es un acervo indeciso de borradores contradictorios. [...] en el tercer capítulo muere el héroe, en el cuarto está vivo'.[88] The confusion of Ts'ui Pen's masterpiece at the level of plot is, to a certain degree, a criticism of our monolithic conception of 'un tiempo uniforme, absoluto',[89] as Ts'ui Pen believes in:

> infinitas series de tiempos, en una red creciente y vertiginosa de tiempos divergentes, convergentes y paralelos. Esa trama de tiempos que se aproximan, se bifurcan, se cortan o que secularmente se ignoran, abarca *todas* las posibilidades.[90]

Ts'ui Pen's conception of time is transgressive and reveals the complexity of the universe by showing how other events which may have forked from the same cause are also happening in other temporal dimensions. This radical concept of

---

[87] Borges, 'El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan', p. 475.
[88] Borges, 'El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan', p. 476.
[89] Borges, 'El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan', p. 479. Calvino also discusses Borges's use of time in this short story, see Calvino, 'Jorge Luis Borges', in his *Saggi 1945-1985*, i, 1292-300 (esp. pp. 1298-99) (first publ. 1984).
[90] Borges, 'El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan', p. 479. His italics.

time can also be applied to the plot of the short story itself as Albert self-consciously attempts to read it:

> en algunos existe usted y no yo; en otros, yo, no usted; en otros, los dos. En éste, que un favorable azar me depara, usted ha llegado a mi casa; en otro, usted, al atravesar el jardín, me ha encontrado muerto; en otro, yo digo estas mismas palabras, pero soy un error, un fantasma.[91]

Had all events followed their dire deterministic courses, the branching of events that leads to the unceasing pullulation of situations would not have happened since all events would abide by the laws of causal determinism. However, Borges's narrative shows the reader that reality does not occur that way: the noisy character of reality, in which all sorts of contingencies are possible, can explain why a series of events fork out. The exact location where events fork is where noise disrupts the deterministic chain of events. 'El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan' is thus representative of Paulson's narrative mode, in which contingency plays a significant role.

Calvino also addresses the importance of the unpredictable. In 'I cristalli',[92] for example, he aims to portray the role that random events play in the construction of reality through the dialogue between the two main characters, Qfwfq and Vug. Qfwfq's passion for order is set against Vug's preference for irregularities and differences. Qfwfq hopes to see the universe filled with symmetrical and orderly objects: 'In me l'idea d'un mondo assolutamente regolare, simmetrico, metodico, s'associa a questo primo impeto e rigoglio della natura, alla tensione amorosa, a quello che voi dite l'eros [...]'.[93] This is reflected in his view of the formation of crystals, which he believes is 'il reticolo degli atomi che si ripete di continuo

[91] Borges, 'El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan', p. 479.
[92] Calvino, 'I cristalli', in his *Romanzi e racconti*, ii, 248-56 (first publ. 1967).
[93] Calvino, 'I cristalli', p. 250.

[...]'.[94] Vug, by contrast, believes that elements of irregularities and differences exist in crystals. Nevertheless, the more Qfwfq scrutinises crystals, the more he is persuaded by Vug's belief that unpredictable elements lie within the seemingly orderly pattern:

> Il cristallo che è riuscito a essere il mondo, a rendere il mondo trasparente a se stesso, a rifrangerlo in infinite immagini spettrali, non è il mio: è un cristallo corroso, macchiato, mescolato. La vittoria dei cristalli (e di Vug) è stata la stessa cosa della loro sconfitta (e della mia).[95]

Qfwfq begins to realise and accept that the unpredictable plays a significant role in constructing his universe. If Borges privileges the role of the random in 'El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan', Calvino takes a step further, pointing out not only the significance of chance but also the dialectic tension that exists between the orderly and the random, that together formulate our cultural manifestations, here objectified in the image of crystals.

Dour Fatalism or Ludic Disruption?

With the privileging of chance and the use of what Paulson calls the narrative mode, Borges and Calvino attempt to challenge the simplistic idea of reality as following a rigidly deterministic course. As their narratives suggest, such a view of reality is regarded as oppressive, especially in its deliberate endeavour to exclude noise or contingency from the processes of knowledge conceptualisation. The issue is made more complicated when there are attempts to demystify the existence of chance via scientific methods, thereby missing out on its essence which defies any form of representation. Paulson also warns against this case:

---

[94] Calvino, 'I cristalli', p. 252.
[95] Calvino, 'I cristalli', p. 256.

> Like science, the rational order of critical demystification can be oppressive in its attempts to control chance. It is no surprise, then, that resistance to it can take forms of both ludic disruption and dour fatalism.[96]

If ludic disruption and dour fatalism are set to oppose rationalisation, both of them also form another level of opposite extremes, as two different attitudes of thinkers trying to deal with chance whilst preserving its mystic status.

Borges's attitude towards chance and the human incapacity to comprehend its appearance in reality can be regarded as somewhat pessimistic. In 'El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan', even though Yu Tsun is impressed by Albert, learning that Albert has devoted time and energy studying the work of his ancestor, he nevertheless kills Albert and accuses fate of letting him fall into a situation in which he is unable to avoid killing the sinologist. The murder of Albert can be seen as fatal revenge, since Ts'ui Pen was also murdered by a foreigner.[97] Therefore, Albert's death is inevitable as it seems that fate has already designed his lot. After Albert's murder, it is no wonder that Yu Tsun's feelings are of 'innumerable contrición y cansancio',[98] not only because of killing a man who could have been his friend, but also because of his incapacity of overcoming fate. It can thus be argued that Borges views chance with pessimism since it engenders fatalism, which in a sense is analogous to the nightmarish labyrinth within which Yu Tsun is trapped.

In contrast, Calvino's attitude towards chance is that of playful acceptance. As we have seen, he acknowledges the tension between the contingent and the

---

[96] Paulson, 'Chance, Complexity, and Narrative Explanation', p. 20.
[97] For more details on the theme of revenge and chase, see Elisa Rey, 'El héroe, el traidor y el laberinto. A propósito de 'El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan'', *Logos*, 16 (1980-81), 207-13.
[98] Borges, 'El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan', p. 480.

deterministic; however, instead of viewing it in an antagonistic manner, he regards the clash between the two sides as natural and unavoidable. In 'I cristalli', the crystal becomes a telling image of his playful and accepting attitude. For Calvino, the intrusion of the unpredictable is not a matter of life and death, as implied in Borges's story; even though it signifies Qfwfq's defeat, it also points to the banality of such a defeat as the issue of order/chance becomes one of the petty topics that Qfwfq and Vug use in bickering. In addition, the disruption of the pattern by chance in the formation of crystals also partakes in the creation of the crystals' rare beauty, as evidenced in one of the couple's conversations:

> Dove in un cristallo d'alluminio il caso disperde degli atomi di cromo, là la trasparenza si colora d'un rosso cupo: così sotto i nostri passi fiorivano i rubini.
> – Hai visto? – diceva Vug. – Non sono belli?
> Non potevamo percorrere una valle di rubini senza riattaccare i bisticci.
> – Sì, – dicevo io, – perché la regolarità dell'esagono ...
> – Uffa! – diceva lei. – Dimmi se senza l'intrusione d'atomi estranei sarebbero rubini![99]

The beauty of the crystals is not caused by elements of order alone; contingent elements are also needed so that interesting colour and arrangement can formulate. An implication is that chance should be viewed as a positive element that has its aesthetic values.

From these stories, Calvino's view of chance is more positive than Borges's. Even though both authors acknowledge the role that chance plays in the universe, their attitudes towards contingency are dissimilar. While Borges sees chance as something that remains out of causal laws, and views it as threatening rather than liberating, Calvino considers it to be an indispensable part of nature that needs to

[99] Calvino, 'I cristalli', p. 254.

be accepted as such.[100] For Borges, the realisation of chance is a cause of despair since it makes us realise how much we are trapped in the labyrinth of fate, in which anything can happen to us without any perceivable reason. Calvino, however, goes a step further and teaches us to accept the bleak truth and to learn to look at the whole issue in a different light. The crystal is a beautiful image and its beauty, in this case, lies in the fact that its formation is not always exact.

Limits of Representation and the Inevitability of Pattern

Borges and Calvino explore both internal and external factors that make the patterns of knowledge conceptualisation complex, as human cognition plays an active role in influencing these patterns and there is always a possibility of chance disrupting them. In this light, representation, for Borges and Calvino, is a highly intricate issue since the patterns which human beings use to conceptualise and construct their knowledge are no longer seen as transparent and straightforward. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the notion of pattern should be disregarded. This section will consider how the attempts of Borges and Calvino to liberate representational practices still rely on the notion of pattern, a dependence which in itself signals a certain level of limits of the human condition.

It is worthwhile here to go back to Paulson's differentiation between the two explanatory modes: the algorithmic and the narrative. Even though Paulson privileges the latter to a considerable extent in his essay and goes so far as to regard noise (i.e. chance in this context) as one of the main features that

[100] It can also be argued here that Calvino supports a world-view proposed by Prigogine and Stengers, which includes the notion of 'becoming' as well as that of 'being', the world in which change is not marginalised but becomes part of the norm. For Prigogine and Stengers, 'being', which characterises the world as the deterministic chains of causal events, is not to be opposed to 'becoming', which privileges the laws involving temporal change and irreversibility. Both of the views express two related aspects of reality. For more details, see Prigogine and Stengers, *Order out of Chaos*, p. 310.

distinguishes literary from scientific discourses,[101] he believes that the narrative mode, to a certain degree, still depends on one of the main features of the algorithmic, i.e. pattern. This is because, if the narrative is constructed out of pure aleatory elements, nobody will understand it:

> Narrative is not pure aleatory succession. If it were, narratology could have been laughed out of existence a long time ago. When most literary scholars refer to narrative they mean pattern, they mean recognisable, repeatable (though not generally rigid) schemata for organising events into wholes that have such features as familiar plots and beginnings, middles, and ends.[102]

Pattern represents an indispensable tool to organise elements of disorder in the text so as to enable the reader to comprehend the text. In the narratives of Borges and Calvino, one can also perceive the dialectic that exists between the algorithmic and the narrative: they do not mention the emergence of chance in passing, but attempt to come to terms with its existence. For Paulson, this means subjecting chance to the explanatory powers of the algorithmic:

> To the extent that narrative moves in the direction of the incompressible, random succession, it 'explains' less and less, or rather it cannot be recognised or accepted as 'explanation'. The psychological concept of explanation bespeaks an unwillingness to accept 'it just happened that way' as a meaningful statement [...].[103]

---

[101] For Paulson, noise generates textual ambiguity and it is this ambiguity that distinguishes literary discourse. Taking his cue from Jurij Lotman's *The Structure of the Artistic Text*, he argues that the reader is required to create new codes in reading the poetic text since noise is incorporated in the text. For more details, see Paulson, 'Literature, Complexity, Interdisciplinarity', in *Chaos and Order: Complex Dynamics in Literature and Science*, pp. 37-53.

[102] Paulson, 'Chance, Complexity, and Narrative Explanation', pp. 11-12.

[103] Paulson, 'Chance, Complexity, and Narrative Explanation', p. 15.

In other words, by agreeing to represent the role of chance and its implication in textual terms, both authors need to allow elements of reason and the non-random to come into play, since these elements are basic constituents of any representation.

These dialectical moments that open up the issue of representational limits can be linked to the idea that an act of writing is analogous to a self-organised act of ordering chaos, as Calvino states in an interview with William Weaver that 'the conflict between the chaos of the world and man's obsession with making some sense of it is a recurrent pattern in what I've written'.[104] His narrative, therefore, has a close relationship with contingency, even though the connection is not always marked as positive.[105] In the same way, as we have seen, Borges's summoning up of the image of the garden of forking paths represents an attempt to impose an overtly orderly image of the artificial garden upon the world of chaos.[106] Following this line of thought, it can be argued that by exploring the patterns of knowledge conceptualisation their narratives border on the limits of representation, attempting to present the unpresentable, which in this context is chance and background noise which constantly undermines the oppressive view of reality as rigidly deterministic.[107]

---

[104] William Weaver, 'Calvino: An Interview and its Story', p. 30.

[105] Calvino considers chance to be an indispensable element in the narrative that needs to be directly addressed to: 'La poesia è la grande nemica del caso, pur essendo anch'essa figlia del caso e sapendo che il caso in ultima istanza avrà partita vinta' (Calvino, *Lezioni americane*, p. 688).

[106] For more details of chaos and order in the works of Borges, see Jaime Alazraki, *La prosa narrative de Jorge Luis Borges: temas – estilo*, esp. pp. 52-64. Alazraki also acknowledges the impossibility of human beings to order the world of chaos and attributes this failure to chance, which symbolises the inscrutability of divine power.

[107] In this light, their narratives can be classified as 'cybernetic fiction', a kind of literature which seeks to escape from the oppressive control of modern scientific laws. David Porush, one of the pioneering scholars researching on this area of study, bases his idea of cybernetics on Norbert Wiener's study, which seeks laws of communication that apply equally to living beings and machines. See Wiener, *Cybernetics: Control and Communication in the Animal and in the Machine* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1948). Porush's cybernetic fiction signifies an attempt by human beings to represent that part of them that cannot be presented. For him, it 'defeats the powerful implications of the cybernetic paradigm by making readers feel that there is something left over – some irreducible, inexpressible, and unquantifiable substratum of meaningful silence beyond or beneath cybernetic analysis – in human communication, even when

Much as both authors challenge the privileging of order or pattern, they recognise the need for them. In Borges's 'Tigres azules', for example, the belief in arithmetic needs to be sustained if one wishes to live peacefully in the world. Craigie's encounter with the monstrous blue stones causes him to view the world in a new perspective, i.e. that without the solace of arithmetic, that he once believed could be applied to all cases. Towards the end of the story, after he gives the blue stones to a beggar in a mosque, the mysterious receiver answers: 'No sé aún cuál es tu limosna, pero la mía es espantosa. Te quedas con los días y las noches, con la cordura, con los hábitos, con el mundo.'[108] The chance encounter with these stones costs Craigie the tranquillity of the belief that everything can be explained away scientifically. In return for the alms he has given to the beggar, he realises that he has received the multiplicity of the world, the whole complexity that resists any scientific rationalisation. For Borges, even though the notion of pattern bespeaks our cognitive limits, it gives us comfort and relief, knowing that the world is subjected to repeated schemes, thereby facilitating our limited comprehension. This tranquillity and solace generated by pattern is also acknowledged by Calvino: we have seen how Palomar is impressed by the giraffe because it represents the universal harmony that the world surrounding him lacks and how the lack of order and symmetry in the image of crystal is a cause of despair for Qfwfq in 'I cristalli'.

If Borges acknowledges the need for pattern in his narrative, Calvino also suggests our need to accept a symbiotic relationship between pattern and chance, or, on another level, between order and chaos. The blind aspiration for the representation of absolute truth is debunked by both writers owing to

---

it occurs through so complex and controlled a 'servo-mechanical system' as the literary text' (Porush, 'Cybernetic Fiction and Postmodern Science', *New Literary History*, 20 (1989), 373-96 (pp. 379-80)). See also Porush, *The Soft Machine: Cybernetic Fiction* (New York and London: Methuen, 1985).

[108] Borges, 'Tigres azules', p. 72.

inadequacies on the part of human cognition to comprehend the complexity of the world. Its main ways to represent the real, such as reductionistic analysis, objectivity, and causality, have their own limitations, as both authors take great pain to elaborate. Their narratives acknowledge such limits of representation and posit a new way to approach the real, in which truth is no longer absolute but provisional, no longer universal but local. In other words, truth should not be viewed as the exact representation of the real, but as an approximation to it, in which both chance and pattern come into play.

Chapter 3

Hermeneutic Inquiry and the Indeterminacy of Meaning

We have seen how the constraints engendered by language and our cognitive processes frame and filter reality: while language is considered to separate representation from reality, human cognition is seen to widen that distance by revealing that much of the reality that human beings experience is shaped by the processes of conceptualisation themselves. In other words, the processes of rendering the real are not ones of a straightforward correspondence, but are highly complicated, since observed reality is screened through such patterns as reductionistic analysis and causality. Elements of contingency, which elude deterministic patterns, emerge and disrupt them. Polarisation becomes visible: if representation marks a deterministic construction of the real, reality which continues to elude representation, comes to be distinguished by its indeterminacy, by its resistance to any act to reduce it down to fixed patterns or schema.

This chapter will consider indeterminacy of absolute reality through the narratives of Borges and Calvino in relation to the notion of hermeneutic inquiry.[1] The first two sections aim to show how absolute, stable meaning can no longer be ascertained in their narratives, as evinced by their employment of unresolved secrecy as a main theme in some stories. This motif will be explored further in the next part, which sets out to discuss their narratives in the light of Edgar Allan Poe's conception of detective fiction. Both Borges's 'La muerte y la brújula' and Calvino's *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore* will be the key

[1] For more details on hermeneutics, see Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969); P. D. Juhl, *Interpretation: An Essay in the Philosophy of Literary Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980); Mario J. Valdés, *Phenomenological Hermeneutics and the Study of Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987). For key texts of hermeneutics, see also *New Literary History*, 3 (1971-72).

texts to be analysed as they extensively utilise and subvert elements of detective fiction. The discussion will focus on the role of human intellect in demystification, which then leads to an analysis of the differences between Poe's narratives and those of Borges and Calvino in terms of pre-determined design and chance. Desire will also be a focal point in the chapter since it paradoxically fuels and disrupts human beings' search for ultimate meaning. The last section aims both to show how the narratives of Borges and Calvino may be regarded as critiques and developments of Poe's detective fiction, and to analyse the difference in the attitudes of Borges and Calvino towards hermeneutics.

The Multiplicity of Meaning

The notion of reality as impenetrable affects such fundamental concepts as interpretation and meaning. If language and human cognition prevent human beings from reaching the real, the idea of absolute meaning is essentially challenged. Textual meaning is regarded as provisional and its production is volatile and dynamic. In this respect, one can link this line of thinking with that of Paul Ricoeur's concepts of text and interpretation. For Ricoeur, text is defined as 'any discourse fixed by writing',[2] as opposed to speech. Like Barthes, he argues that the focus should be placed more on the reader in textual practices. If a dialogue is established in speech, placing equal importance and spontaneous correspondence between interlocutors, in textual practices the situation is different:

> Dialogue is an exchange of questions and answers; there is no exchange of this sort between the writer and the reader. The writer does not respond to the reader. Rather, the book divides the act of writing and the act of reading into two sides,

[2] Paul Ricoeur, 'What Is a Text? Explanation and Understanding', in his *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action, and Interpretation*, ed. and trans. by John B. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 145-64 (p. 145).

> between which there is no communication. The reader is absent from the act of writing; the writer is absent from the act of reading. The text thus produces a double eclipse of the reader and the writer. It thereby replaces the relation of dialogue, which directly connects the voice of one to the hearing of the other.[3]

For Ricoeur, the differentiation between textual practice and oral communication generates certain implications regarding relations between language, reality, and the processes of how human beings conceptualise their experience. The concept of reference changes: even though text still has an obligation to refer to something, the point of reference is not the world outside, but the text itself. In a sense, this harks back to what Foucault means by literature in his modern episteme, in which language folds onto itself, referring to its own existence.[4] In light of this, the idea that there is an author out there to verify a correct interpretation no longer applies:

> [...] the author is instituted by the text, that he stands in the space of meaning traced and inscribed by writing. The text is the very place where the author appears.[5]

Thus the concept of one verifiable, correct meaning is put into question since the authority of the authorial figure is limited. Ricoeur also revises the notion of reading in the wake of the openness of textual practice. Reading is no longer regarded as a discovery of meaning inscribed by the author; on the contrary, it is considered to be a production site where meaning is engendered:

---

[3] Ricoeur, 'What Is a Text? Explanation and Understanding', pp. 146-47.
[4] For Foucault, literature is what becomes of language when language is aware of the chasm between reality and textual representation: 'there is nothing for [literature] to do but to curve back in a perpetual return upon itself, as if its discourse could have no other content than the expression of its own form; it addresses itself to itself as a writing subjectivity, or seeks to re-apprehend the essence of all literature in the movement that brought it into being; and thus all its threads converge upon the finest of points — singular, instantaneous, and yet absolutely universal — upon the simple act of writing' (Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 300).
[5] Ricoeur, 'What Is a Text? Explanation and Understanding', p. 149.

> The identity of the narrative text is not confined to the so-called 'inside' of the text. As a dynamic identity, it emerges at the intersection between the world of text and the world of the reader. It is in the act of reading that the capacity of the plot to transfigure experience is actualised.[6]

For Ricoeur, reading or interpreting text is more like an act of 'appropriation', about which he writes:

> [...] that the interpretation of a text culminates in the self-interpretation of a subject who thenceforth understands himself better, understands himself differently, or simply begins to understand himself.[7]

Following this line of argument, meaning is no longer a stable entity awaiting the reader's discovery of the author's intention. Rather, it is a product of the interactive clashes between the text and the reader. The meaning of a text thus changes every time it is read, simply because the accumulative experience of the reader is always disparate.[8] An example of this appears in Borges's 'Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote', mentioned in Chapter One. The narrator is able to supply two readings of the same text of *Don Quijote*, the first written by Cervantes and the second by Menard. Despite the sameness of the text, the fact that the narrator manages to interpret it in different ways reinforces Ricoeur's

---

[6] Ricoeur, 'The Text as Dynamic Identity', in *Identity of the Literary Text*, ed. by Mario J. Valdés and Owen Miller (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), pp. 175-86 (p. 183).

[7] Ricoeur, 'What Is a Text? Explanation and Understanding', p. 158. For more details, see also Ricoeur, 'Appropriation', in his *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action, and Interpretation*, pp. 182-93.

[8] Calvino also touches upon this volatile aspect of textual meaning when he contemplates the classics. For him, the classics always give the reader new insights everytime he or she reads them: '[...] Se i libri sono rimasti gli stessi (ma anch'essi cambiano, nella luce d'una prospettiva storica mutata) noi siamo certamente cambiati, e l'incontro è un avvenimento del tutto nuovo' (Calvino, 'Perché leggere i classici', in his *Saggi 1945-1985*, ii, 1816-24 (p. 1818) (first publ. 1981)).

belief that meaning is not stable, but is engendered by a complex interaction between the text and the reader.

The indeterminacy of meaning[9] and the incapacity to unearth a single, correct textual meaning are explored in Borges's 'El libro de arena'.[10] The narrator of this story encounters a magical book, called the Book of Sand because 'ni el libro ni la arena tienen ni principio ni fin.'[11] When he is asked to try to find the first and the last pages, he always discovers that there are several pages between the page he opens and the cover:

> Apoyé la mano izquierda sobre la portada y abrí con el dedo pulgar casi pegado al índice. Todo fue inútil: siempre se interponían varias hojas entre la portada y la mano. Era como si brotaran del libro.[12]

He is also perplexed when he realises that whenever he opens the book, he always finds a new page: the pages that he has seen will never be seen again. In a way, the book can be viewed metaphorically as the whole gamut of texts compiled in one single volume; the Book of Sand is perhaps textuality itself. If text is seen as infinite, meaning should be seen ironically at least as *doubly* infinite, especially if it is regarded as an interactive practice between the text and the reader. The fact that the narrator never opens the same page twice can be compared to the notion that a reader cannot have a single meaning out of the same text twice, since his or her accumulated experience has changed. The page is thereby analogous to the reader's interpretation, which can never be stabilised.

---

[9] For more details on the issue of textual indeterminacy and the relevant debate, see also Charles Altieri, 'The Hermeneutics of Literary Indeterminacy: A Dissent from the New Orthodoxy', *New Literary History*, 10 (1978), 71-99; Michael Riffaterre, 'Interpretation and Undecidability', *New Literary History*, 12 (1980), 227-42; Gerald Graff, 'Determinacy/Indeterminacy', in *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, pp. 163-76.

[10] Borges, 'El libro de arena', in his *El libro de arena*, pp. 167-76.

[11] Borges, 'El libro de arena', p. 172.

[12] Borges, 'El libro de arena', p. 172.

The multiplicity of meaning sheds light upon the infinity of the self, since the self provides a site where this endless multiplication of meaning occurs:

> [...] comprendí que el libro era monstruoso. De nada me sirvió considerar que no menos monstruoso era yo, que lo percibía con ojos y los palpaba con diez dedos con uñas.[13]

In this respect, both Borges and Ricoeur agree that the search for meaning leads back to the reader's self, as interpretation is an act of self-understanding. In Ricoeur's words:

> understanding the text is not an end in itself; it mediates the relation to himself of a subject who, in the short circuit of immediate reflection, does not find the meaning of his own life.[14]

The production of meaning, for Ricoeur, is contemporaneous with the construction of self. For Borges, this construction of self is nothing but the realisation that the self is a space of monstrosity, capable of conceiving of an endless chain of textual interpretations.

While Borges explores textual multiplicity through his image of a single yet infinite book, leading eventually to a recognition of the monstrous self, Calvino uses the sun's ray as a metaphor to shed light on the limits of self. In 'La spada del sole',[15] a story of the *Palomar* collection, the protagonist goes to the sea and contemplates sunlight:

---

[13] Borges, 'El libro de arena', p. 175.
[14] Ricoeur, 'What Is a Text? Explanation and Understanding', p. 158.
[15] Calvino, 'La spada del sole', in his *Romanzi e racconti*, ii, 883-87 (first publ. 1983).

> Entra in acqua, si stacca dalla riva, e il riflesso del sole diventa una spada scintillante nell'acqua che dall'orrizzonte s'allunga fino a lui. Il signor Palomar nuota nella spada o per meglio dire la spada resta sempre davanti a lui, a ogni sua bracciata si ritrae, e non si lascia mai raggiungere.[16]

His incapacity to reach beyond the sun perplexes Palomar, who thinks that it is the sun's special homage to him. Yet he scrutinises the consequences of his observation and embarks upon a philosophical investigation of his own perception. Like the narrator of Borges's 'El libro de arena', Palomar faces a polarisation of self and the infinite universe: his incapacity to reach beyond the sun makes him realise his own cognitive limits. Palomar feels that his own cognition imprisons him:

> Tutto questo avviene non sul mare, non nel sole, — pensa il nuotatore Palomar, — ma dentro la mia testa, nei circuiti tra gli occhi e il cervello. Sto nuotando nella mia mente; è solo là che esiste questa spada di luce; e ciò che mi attira è proprio questo. È questo il mio elemento, l'unico che io possa in qualche modo conoscere.[17]

Palomar realises that his experience is screened through his five senses, and that his own experience is nothing but a mere reflection (or interpretation) of a reality. Palomar's own mind, framed by his empirical senses, acts as a barrier between him and the absolute. Ultimate meaning, as epitomised in the sun's ray, always escapes him:

> Non posso raggiungerla, è sempre lì davanti, non può essere insieme dentro di me e qualcosa in cui io nuoto, se la vedo ne resto fuori ed essa resta fuori.[18]

---

[16] Calvino, 'La spada del sole', p. 883.
[17] Calvino, 'La spada del sole', p. 884.
[18] Calvino, 'La spada del sole', p. 884.

Palomar's mind becomes a prison which does not allow him to escape and reach the absolute. The only solution is seen to be ludicrous: to grasp original meaning means to go out of one's own self. Thus Palomar needs to acknowledge the fact that ultimate meaning cannot be attained and whatever he conceptualises in his mind is only a reflection. At one point, Palomar compares the absolute to the sun, both of which he cannot appreciate in their original forms, but only in attenuated reflections:

> Conta solo l'origine di ciò che è: qualcosa che il mio sguardo non può sostenere se non in forma attenuata come in questo tramonto. Tutto il resto è riflesso tra i riflessi, me compreso.[19]

This sense of distance between reality and human reflection is analogous to the difference between ultimate meaning and interpretation. Like the sun, ultimate meaning is denied to human beings because their empirical senses set boundaries that they cannot transgress. Following this logic, the multiplicity of meaning occurs because each reader is incarcerated in his or her own prison of mind. Each of them constructs his or her own rendition, which is nothing but a reflection of the absolute.

The Indeterminacy of Meaning and Irresolvable Secrecy

The preoccupation of Borges and Calvino with the unattainable status of the absolute can be stylistically seen in their works. In Chapter One, for example, silence was analysed as a stylistic strategy by both authors to mark the inviolable boundaries between reality and representation. Likewise, in this section, the emphasis will be placed upon the themes of secrecy and inquiry and how both

[19] Calvino, 'La spada del sole', p. 885.

authors employ them stylistically. In 'La secta del Fénix',[20] for instance, Borges touches upon the theme of secrecy by exploring and describing a sect whose ritual becomes a secret that has been passed down from generation to generation, and whose secret becomes the *raison d'être* of the sect itself. The name itself is rarely mentioned in oral language and people who are in the sect do not use the name of Phoenix: '[...] en Ginebra he tratado con artesanos que no me comprendieron cuando inquirí si eran hombres del Fénix, pero que admitieron, acto continuo, ser hombres del Secreto'.[21] The origin of the sect is not clear either: the narrator cannot say when the sect was first established, and nor can he say who were its founding people. In a nutshell, there are shrouds of secrecy around the sect's institution.[22] People who participate in the sect do not form into a distinctive group; they seem to spread across the world. Neither do they have sacred texts to record their rituals and regulations. The only thing that unites them together is the Secret:

> Sin un libro sagrado que los congregue como la Escritura a Israel, sin una memoria común, sin esa otra memoria que es un idioma, desparramados por la faz de la tierra, diversos de color y de rasgos, una sola cosa — el Secreto — los une y los unirá hasta el fin de los dias.[23]

Throughout the narrative, Borges never tells the reader what the secret is, but the whole story serves as a series of clues to tantalise the reader. In this sense, the narrator is like a playful storyteller who asks the reader a riddle, supplies clues, and does not give an answer.

---

[20] Borges, 'La secta del Fénix', in his *Obras completas 1923-1972*, pp. 522-24 (first publ. 1944).
[21] Borges, 'La secta del Fénix', p. 522.
[22] See also a structural analysis of the story in Valdés, *Phenomenological Hermeneutics and the Study of Literature*, pp. 104-10.
[23] Borges, 'La secta del Fénix', p. 523.

However, the whole story is made more complicated when one recognises that some clues are somewhat vague, if not self-contradictory. First, even though the ritual underpins the establishment of the sect, mothers are not supposed to hand down their secret to their children. The task is placed in the hand of those of lower caste, such as slaves, lepers, or beggars. Yet, despite these restrictions, children can also tell the secret among themselves. Second, the ritual itself seems to be an insignificant act: 'El acto en sí es trivial, momentáneo y no requiere descripción'.[24] The narrator also relates that the ritual is both sacred and ridiculous at the same time. In addition, there are no decent words to describe this ritual; yet, every word seems to point towards the ritual itself:

> No hay palabras decentes para nombrarlo, pero se entiende que todas las palabras lo nombran o mejor dicho, que inevitablemente lo aluden, y así, en el diálogo yo he dicho una cosa cualquiera y los adeptos han sonreído o se han puesto incómodos, porque sintieron que yo había tocado el Secreto.[25]

Owing to these ambiguous hints, it can be argued that the Secret itself is indeterminate, since Borges does not supply enough information for the reader to be able to arrive at a single, correct interpretation. The reader needs to use other information or experience to hazard a guess, not unlike what Ricoeur means by appropriation. In this respect, the Secret can be viewed as analogous to absolute meaning, which is both unattainable yet tantalising.

Borges also deals with the theme of secrecy in 'El etnógrafo',[26] in which he relates the strange life of Fred Murdock, who needs to go out to the prairie to observe the Amerindians. He is assigned by his professor to observe their rites and the medicinal secret that the Amerindians keep in their tribe. Like 'La secta

[24] Borges, 'La secta del Fénix', p. 523.
[25] Borges, 'La secta del Fénix', p. 523.
[26] Borges, 'El etnógrafo', in his *Obras completas 1923-1972*, pp. 989-90 (first publ. 1969).

del Fénix', the theme of secrecy is predominant in this story as Murdock is entrusted with the exposure of this secret. This obligation demands that he stay with the tribe long enough to gain their trust. This long adventure, however, changes Murdock's lifestyle and thinking:

> Se levantaba antes del alba, se acostaba al anochecer, llegó a soñar en un idioma que no era el de sus padres. Acostumbró su paladar a sabores ásperos, se cubrió con ropas extrañas, olvidó los amigos y la ciudad, llegó a pensar de una manera que su lógica rechazaba.[27]

It can be said that Murdock, living on the prairie for two years, adopts the Amerindian thinking in order to gain information for his research. Yet, after only a few months, he decides not to take notes. After a period of time, Murdock is firmly accepted into the tribe and the secret is revealed to him. Despite his successful initiation into the Amerindian tribe, Murdock chooses to go back to university. He resolves not to tell the secret to his professor, who keeps on wondering why Murdock has made such a decision:

> — ¿Lo ata su juramento? — preguntó el [profesor].
>
> — No es ésa mi razón — dijo Murdock —. En esas lejanías aprendí algo que no puedo decir.
>
> — ¿Acaso el idioma inglés es insuficiente? — observaría el otro.
>
> — Nada de eso, señor. Ahora que poseo el secreto, podría enunciarlo de cien modos distintos y aun contradictorios. No sé muy bien cómo decirle que el secreto es precioso y que ahora la ciencia, nuestra ciencia, me parece una mera frivolidad.
>
> Agregó al cabo de una pausa:

[27] Borges, 'El etnógrafo', p. 989.

> — El secreto, por lo demás, no vale lo que valen los caminos que me condujeron a él. Esos caminos hay que andarlos.[28]

The conversation reveals that Murdock does not think that the secret is as important as how one discovers it: the search for the secret is somehow just as significant. One of the implications is that the secret varies from one person to another because each person is driven to the pursuit of the secret by a different set of motives. As Murdock has lived with the Amerindians and absorbed himself in their lifestyle and ways of thinking, his discovery of the secret depends considerably on these changes, which lead to a fundamental reconfiguration of his own thought system. In other words, he is able to comprehend the secret in its original light because he has adopted the Amerindian viewpoint. Even if Murdock had decided to tell the secret, the professor could not have understood it in the same way Murdock did since he has not been initiated into the tribe and stayed with them long enough to share their point of view.

The secret in 'El etnógrafo' can then be likened to the sun's ray in Calvino's 'La spada del sole' in the sense that understanding and appreciation can only take place in one's own mind. One cannot be sure that other people will experience wonders in the same way. Like Calvino's 'La spada del sole', absolute meaning is essentially destabilised in Borges's story. This loss of original meaning is affirmed at the end of the story when the narrator refuses to tell the reader what Murdock's secret is, in the same way that the details of secret ritual are withheld in 'La secta del Fénix'. Despite possessing the secret, Murdock chooses to live his life like an ordinary person: 'Fred se casó, se divorció y es ahora uno de los bibliotecarios de Yale'.[29] Like 'La secta del Fénix', the secret in 'El etnógrafo' is

[28] Borges, 'El etnógrafo', p. 990.
[29] Borges, 'El etnógrafo', p. 990.

not as crucial as how the narrator teases and tantalises the reader, tricking the reader into believing that the secret will be revealed at the end. The surprising twists in both stories can be interpreted as testament to the unattainability of absolute meaning and to the consolation that we may be able to secure only our own interpretations of it.

The first of a series of framed stories in Calvino's *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore* also follows the same path. 'Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore'[30] is about a man who lingers in a train station in a provincial town. Since the town is very small, everyone at the station notices that he is a stranger despite his attempt to keep a low profile. Like 'La secta del Fénix' and 'El etnógrafo', the story is pregnant with secrets as the reader is not given much information at all. The beginning of the story, for instance, is literally depicted as being covered with clouds and puffs, an image which denotes a sense of mystery:

> Il romanzo comincia in una stazione ferroviaria, sbuffa una locomotiva, uno sfiatare di stantuffo copre l'apertura del capitolo, una nuvola di fumo nasconde parte del primo capoverso.[31]

In addition to the mysterious setting, the details of the protagonist and his mission are also curtailed:

> Io sono l'uomo che va e viene tra il bar e la cabina telefonica. Ossia: quell'uomo si chiama 'io' e non sai altro di lui, così come questa stazione si chiama soltanto 'stazione' e al di fuori di essa non esiste altro che il segnale senza riposta d'un telefono che suona in una stanza buia d'una città lontana.[32]

---

[30] Even though the story bears the same name as the title of the whole novel, it constitutes only one of the series of the beginnings that the protagonists come across.
[31] Calvino, *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore*, p. 620.
[32] Calvino, *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore*, p. 621.

Calvino omits a great deal of information: the reader is not informed of the name of the town the protagonist is in; nor is he or she told to what exact destination the protagonist makes a phone call. The reader only knows that his call to an unnamed city is not answered.

As the story progresses, the reader realises that the protagonist is in a difficult situation. He is stranded at a train station, unsure of what he should do next and worried about the suitcase he is carrying. The sense of secrecy increases as the protagonist goes on to describe the suitcase: 'Quello che pare sicuro è che non è un bagaglio qualsiasi, da poterlo consegnare al deposito bagagli o far finta di dimenticarlo nella sala d'aspetto.'[33] It seems that the protagonist does not know what is inside the suitcase. He is simply supposed to exchange this suitcase with another one, supposedly similar yet empty. However, no one comes to meet him at the train station. It is not until the end of the story that a local police officer comes to tell him to catch a mysterious train so that he can get out of town as soon as possible. Like 'La secta del Fénix' and 'El etnógrafo', the secret in 'Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore' is never explained: we never know what kind of mission the protagonist is assigned to do and what is in the suitcase. We only know that the protagonist needs to leave the town with the mysterious suitcase; the details of whereabouts he is going next are not supplied as the story comes to an abrupt end. The story is in fact interrupted because the protagonist (the Reader) in the frame novel *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore* finds that the whole text is repeated over again.

This abrupt ending is crucial in the sense that it shows how a sense of secrecy is never dissipated after it is gradually increased through the course of the narrative. In fact, the text self-consciously registers and plays upon the reader's

[33] Calvino, 'Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore', p. 623.

feeling of uncertainty several times. For example, it suggests how a sense of secrecy should have been gradually dissipated, not increased, as the story progresses:

> È già da un paio di pagine che stai andando avanti a leggere e sarebbe ora che ti si dicesse chiaramente se questa a cui io sono sceso da un treno in ritardo è una stazione d'una volta o una stazione d'adesso; invece le frasi continuano a muoversi nell'indeterminato, nel grigio, in una specie di terra di nessuno dell'esperienza ridotta al minimo comune denominatore.[34]

Calvino's story self-consciously continues to highlight textual indeterminacy and shows how it can be used as a strategy to draw the reader's attention to the development of plot:

> [...] e quanto più grigio comune indeterminato e qualsiasi è l'inizio di questo romanzo tanto più tu e l'autore sentite un'ombra di pericolo crescere su quella frazione di 'io' che avete sconsideratamente investita nell''io' d'un personaggio che non sapete che storia si porti dietro, come quella valigia di cui vorrebbe tanto riuscire a disfarsi.[35]

It can thus be argued that, while Borges's stylistic use of secrecy as an underlying theme in some of his stories is comparable to a quiet seduction, alluring the reader to fall into his trap, Calvino here touches upon secrecy directly and does not hesitate to make his strategy known self-consciously in his narrative. Despite this difference, secrecy points towards textual indeterminacy for both writers, as it becomes a strategy which they use in order to convey a sense of unresolved, unstable dispersal of meaning.

---

[34] Calvino, 'Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore', pp. 621-22.
[35] Calvino, 'Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore', p. 625.

Search and Demystification: The Use of Detective Fiction

In this section, detective fiction will be used as a heuristic model to shed light on how Borges and Calvino deal with the notions of search and secrecy since both authors, as we shall see, use the traditional paradigm of detective fiction as a ground from which their ideologies are developed. A skeletal definition of detective fiction is needed at this stage to pave the way for further analysis:[36] traditional detective fiction centres round a mystery from which a detective, be he or she amateur or professional, functions as a seeker of truth, of the disentanglement of mystery. The denouement generally involves rational explanations, either with the revelation or exposure of criminal or an alleviating explication which eases tensions gradually generated through the narrative.[37]

In this traditional strain of detective fiction, the focal point is not the individual psychology of each character but interactive relationships among them that eventually form a narrative web. The reader is not given elaborate details of the development of each character, as the purpose of this kind of fiction is not so

---

[36] It should be borne in mind that it is difficult to define detective fiction and one can only provide a rough, if not reductive, definition if one wishes it to be broad enough to cover its wide-ranged and nuanced spectrum. For details on structural analysis of detective fiction, see Yu K. Scheglov, 'Towards a Description of Detective Story Structure', trans. by L. M. O'Toole, in *Generating the Literary Text*, ed. by L. M. O'Toole (n.p.: n. pub., 1975), pp. 51-77; Tzvetan Todorov, 'The Typology of Detective Fiction', in his *The Poetics of Prose*, trans. by Richard Howard (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977), pp. 42-52. Anthologies which are devoted to critical studies of detective fiction include Howard Haycraft, ed., *The Art of the Mystery Story* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1946); and Francis M. Nevins, Jr., ed., *The Mystery Writer's Art* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1970). More recent critical pieces are compiled in Glenn Most, and William Stowe, eds, *The Poetics of Murder: Detective Fiction and Literary Theory* (San Diego: Harcourt, 1983); H. Gustav Klaus, and Stephen Knight, eds, *The Art of Murder: New Essays on Detective Fiction* (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1998); and Maurizio Ascari, ed., *Two Centuries of Detective Fiction: A New Comparative Approach* (Bologna: University of Bologna, 2000).

[37] This type of ending which entails rational explanations of the seemingly inscrutable mystery can also be seen in the light of the fantastic paradigm of Tzvetan Todorov. The detective story, according to Todorov, falls into the category of the uncanny since the mystery is explained rationally at the end, while in the narrative of the pure fantastic, such as Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*, the mystery remains unresolved at the end. For more details, see Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. by Richard Howard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), pp. 49-51.

much insight into human psyche as the pleasure derived from knowing who the murderer is and why he or she commits a crime. Characters in this type of detective fiction are similar to chess pieces in a game since its characteristics are not as important as their functions and positions. In other words, it becomes a game in which the writer, as represented by the criminal who creates a mystery, challenges the reader to find a solution:

> The detective story should not just be a puzzle. It should be a game – a 'great battle of wits between the writer and the reader' – pursued with rigour and frivolity in more or less equal parts. It needed rules, [...] and above all it needed a spirit of fair play.[38]

These formulae for detective fiction, or what John G. Cawelti terms 'the aestheticizing of crime',[39] were clearly influenced by tales written by Edgar Allan Poe, who, for Borges, was the predecessor of detective fiction.[40] His imaginary personage, Charles Auguste Dupin, becomes the prototype of later detectives such as Hercule Poirot and Sherlock Holmes.[41] What distinguishes

---

[38] Ian Ousby, *The Crime and Mystery Book: A Reader's Companion* (Hong Kong: Thames and Hudson, 1997), p. 67.

[39] John G. Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1976), p. 99. However, for Cawelti, Poe is not so much a predecessor of the detective genre as an interesting transitional figure since his version of the detective story moves strongly towards the aestheticising of crime. The origin of the detective story proves to be complex and multiple; it needs to be considered alongside the myths that focus on crime, criminals, detectives, and the police, which then are synthesised with different archetypal patterns.

[40] Borges, 'El cuento policial', *Borges oral* (Barcelona: Bruguera, 1980), pp. 70-88 (p. 73). However, for most critics, Poe is not the first inventor of detective fiction. He is considered to be one of the writers who popularised the genre. Knight traces the origin of detective fiction back to *The Newgate Calendar*, a tale written in the late eighteenth century. See also Knight, 'Enter the Detective: Early Patterns of Crime Fiction', in *The Art of Murder: New Essays on Detective Fiction*, ed. by H. Gustav Klaus and Stephen Knight (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1998), pp. 10-25. However, Knight does maintain that with the figure of Dupin, the literary detective becomes a fully-formed character. See Knight, 'General Introduction', in *Two Centuries of Detective Fiction: A New Comparative Approach*, pp. 5-14 (p. 9).

[41] Dupin appears in three of his tales: 'The Murders in Rue Morgue', 'The Mystery of Marie Rogêt' and 'The Purloined Letter'. Another tale of his, 'Thou Art the Man', is also considered by a number of critics to be a detective story, and was included in a recent detective anthology, *Twelve American Detective Stories*, ed. by Edward D. Hoch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

Dupin from other detectives is that he is of a rather intellectual sort, picking up clues mostly by internalising the process and sorting it out in his head. The problem-solving process is, therefore, an internal one. Poe uses Dupin as an embodiment of analytic power, which, he believes, is different from ingenuity. The former requires a high level of intellectuality whereas the latter is, for Poe, nothing but a fanciful element.[42] In this line of thought, Poe may have followed Samuel Taylor Coleridge's distinction between 'imagination' and 'fancy', proposed in his *Biographia Literaria*, which was first published in 1817, roughly more than two decades before Poe published the first of his Dupin trilogy.[43] Intellectuality, for Poe, is closely linked with Coleridge's imagination, since imagination, for both Romantic writers, constitutes a creative faculty, endowed by God, and its aim is to impose order and form upon raw materials perceived by the five senses. In the same manner, imagination is indispensable in art as it helps the author work on crude experience, enabling him or her to give it a proper order and form.[44] This idea of intellectual imagination is appropriate when placed in our framework, as detective fiction, expected to be a well-wrought literary form as it were, needs meticulous planning and coherence.

For Poe, detective fiction, or what he himself called 'the tale of ratiocination', works backwards: the author knows the solution to the mystery from the start and tries to work back to the beginning. In 'The Philosophy of Composition', Poe maintains that for good artists the act of working backwards is compulsory:

---

[42] According to Poe: 'The analytic power should not be confounded with simple ingenuity; for while the analyst is necessarily ingenious, the ingenious man is often remarkably incapable of analysis. [...] Between ingenuity and the analytic ability there exists a difference far greater, indeed, than that between the fancy and the imagination, but of a character very strictly analogous. It will be found, in fact, that the ingenious are always fanciful, and the *truly* imaginative never otherwise than analytic.' See Poe, 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue', in his *The Fall of the House of Usher and Other Writings*, ed. by David Galloway (London: Penguin, 1986), pp. 189-224 (pp. 191-92)(first publ. 1841). His italics.

[43] Coleridge's discussion can be found in his *Biographia Literaria*, ed. by George Watson (London: J.M. Dent, 1975), p. 167.

[44] See also R. L. Brett, *Fancy and Imagination* (London: Methuen, 1969).

> [...] every plot, worth the name, must be elaborated to its *dénouement* before anything be attempted with the pen. It is only with the *dénouement* constantly in view that we can give a plot its indispensable air of consequence, or causation, by making the incidents, and especially the tone at all points, tend to the development of the intention.[45]

What is interesting is that the arrangement of details, from the occurrence of the mystery to its disentanglement, needs to be cogent as well as consistent. It need not be exactly true to life, but true to the internal structure to which it adheres. For Timothy Steele, Poe does not work from experience to form; on the contrary, 'he conceives a pre-established design and then casts about for material to accommodate the design.'[46] This 'pre-established design' is where the analytical faculty comes to be of use: the author needs to construct his or her narrative cogently and coherently since the reader, after being provided with ample clues, is encouraged, along with the detective, to unravel the mystery, chiefly by using the method of deduction. Even though the ending may not be in conformity with the reader's guess, it must be consistent with the whole course of narrative.[47] The craft of ratiocination can be explained in a historical manner. According to Stephen Knight:

> Poe combines the twin nineteenth-century legends of the scientist and the artist. [...] One of the great excitements for the intelligentsia of the period was the growing sense that a sufficiently patient inquirer could explain the structure of puzzling phenomena. Another powerful theme, found mostly in art, was that the

---

[45] Poe, 'The Philosophy of Composition', in his *The Fall of the House of Usher and Other Writings*, pp. 480-492 (p. 480). His italics.

[46] Timothy Steele, 'The Structure of the Detective Story: Classical or Modern?', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 27 (1981-1982), 555-570 (p. 562).

[47] David Van Leer links this notion of self-consistency in Poe's detective fiction with Poe's own theory of fiction. Poe's coherence model of truth, he argues, is in practice pertinent to his own principle of 'the unity of effect'. See Van Leer, 'Detecting Truth: The World of the Dupin Tales', in *New Essays on Poe's Major Tales*, ed. by Kenneth Silverman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 65-91 (p. 75).

> fully sensitive individual could pass through the limits of the physical environment to see and know at some higher level.[48]

The combination of artistic and scientific discourses in Poe's detective narrative reflects the faith in humanism, that is, the human capability to comprehend the complexity of natural or supernatural phenomena.

Even though Poe wrote only a handful of detective tales, he set up a relatively new literary creation to offer contemporary readers. In fact, like other literary genres, detective fiction emerged at the same time as its readers, who responded to the fiction in a specific manner.[49] Borges himself confirms this notion, claiming that in creating detective stories, Poe institutionalised the reader of detective fiction. The beginning of the essay, 'El cuento policial', sees Borges attempting to read *Don Quijote* in the manner of detective fiction:

> *En un lugar de la Mancha de cuyo nombre no quiero acordarme, no hace mucho tiempo vivía un hidalgo* ... y ya ese lector está lleno de sospechas, porque el lector de novelas policiales es un lector que lee con incredulidad, con suspicacias, una suspicacia especial.
>
> Por ejemplo, si lee: *En un lugar de la Mancha* ..., desde luego supone que aquello no sucedió en la Mancha. Luego: ... *de cuyo nombre no quiero acordarme* ..., ¿por qué no quiso acordarse Cervantes? Porque sin duda Cervantes era el asesino, el culpable. Luego ... *no hace mucho tiempo* ... posiblemente lo que suceda no será tan aterrador como el futuro.[50]

---

[48] Stephen Knight, *Form and Ideology in Crime Fiction* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1980), pp. 42-43.

[49] See also Jorge Hernández Martín, *Readers and Labyrinths: Detective Fiction in Borges, Bustos Domecq, and Eco* (New York and London: Garland, 1995), esp. Chapter 1 of Part One: A Model of Competence: *The Reader that Detective Fiction Has Made*, pp. 3-11.

[50] Borges, 'El cuento policial', in his *Borges, oral* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1979), pp. 69-88 (p. 73). His italics.

The reader of detective stories, as Borges implies, needs to possess a certain degree of suspension of belief in everything that is told to him or her and is supposed to select only relevant hints that can eventually lead to the criminal, who carries out a crime within the rational framework. This tendency towards self-critical reading is also supported by Jorge Hernández Martín:

> The detective story reader is a conscious reader who questions his or her own intuitions and provides tentative evidence for the feeling of suspicion on the way to a conclusion. In some rational manner, the reader must account for feelings and impressions in terms of facts and argument. The act makes a critic out of the reader for the purposes of fiction.[51]

In this sense, the reader is equated with a detective and both of them are similarly engaged in their search for rational explanations of the mystery.[52] They need to use the basic method of reading and interpreting clues, or what Peter Hühn refers to as the 'hermeneutic circle', which 'involves devising interpretive patterns to integrate signs and then using new signs to modify and adjust these patterns accordingly'.[53] To an extent, this reading process is analogous to the scientific method of deduction: Dupin prefers to deduce conclusions from his own closed system of generalised concepts to bolster his thinking process. The detective's closed system of deduction can be attributed to his own method of reasoning, which, for David Van Leer, 'depends on the logical inevitability of

---

[51] Hernández Martín, *Readers and Labyrinths*, p. 11.

[52] S. S. Van Dine also identifies this analogy in his list of twenty rules. See also Todorov, 'The Typology of Detective Fiction', pp. 48-50. However, it remains to be argued whether the reader identifies himself or herself more with the detective than with the narrator. In terms of formal structure, the reader is invited to identify with the figure of the narrator since the detective's feelings and perceptions remain largely hidden. However, the reader is sometimes discouraged from identifying with the narrator since the narrator represents a somewhat below average reader, as opposed to the detective who seems to be equipped with a god-like intelligence. In my opinion, the identification of the reader is no longer static and wavers between the narrator and the detective.

[53] Peter Hühn, 'The Detective as Reader: Narrativity and Reading Concepts in Detective Fiction', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 33 (1987), 451-466 (p. 455).

any thought process'.[54] This inevitably leads to a relatively simplified rendition of the real since the system of cause and effect is needed in the process of detection to explain the seemingly inscrutable mystery. Once this doctrine of causality is applied, evil is reduced to a simple model of stimulus and response. Truth in Poe's narrative, therefore, assumes a distinctive air: 'truth is true not because it corresponds to an external reality but simply because it is internally self-consistent and hangs together ('coheres')'.[55]

Detective fiction, thanks to Poe, became an intellectual game between the author and the reader, where reason is a predominant element. It becomes a stage where hints invariably lead back to the criminal and there are always rational relationships between hints and the eventual discovery of the criminal. The laws of cause and effect are privileged in this type of fiction and the reader is invited to play along, using clues the detective gradually picks up from the crime scene, from interviews with involved parties, and from various other investigations. Reading Poe's fiction, the reader is exposed to an awareness of a certain form of attaining truth, a means of knowing the world. The points at stake in reading Poe's tales are not only who the criminal is, but also what 'truth' and 'world' are, how they may be reconstructed, and what follows from that construction. For Poe, the success of the detective's inquiry is made possible in the first place because the structure of his detective fiction is carefully constructed in a causal manner. His detective invariably manages to trace back to the criminal and crime motives. At the centre of Poe's world of detection lies absolute meaning, which the detective needs to discover by way of his rational intelligence.

[54] Van Leer, 'Detecting Truth', p. 70.
[55] Van Leer, 'Detecting Truth', p. 75.

From Dupin to Lönnrot: Borges's Universe of Chaos

Using Poe's tales as a yardstick, Borges wrote his celebrated detective story 'La muerte y la brújula'[56] in 1942, about a hundred years after Poe published 'The Murders in Rue Morgue' in *Graham's Magazine*. However, during the space of a century, detective fiction had undergone a series of evolutions both in form and in content. In the first place, unlike Poe's detective Dupin, who enjoys both immunity and detachment from the mystery he is involved in, in Borges's tale the detective is killed at the end. In his attempt to catch up with the criminal's last act, Erik Lönnrot falls victim to Red Scharlach's scheme as he becomes his own criminal's last victim. By contrast, Poe's detective, Dupin, never falls prey and always finds a solution to the mystery. In this light, 'La muerte y la brújula' can be regarded as a suspense novel since, like the whodunnit, it centres around a mystery which a detective needs to solve and, like the thriller, the detective no longer enjoys immunity and detachment.[57] Structurally, Borges's narrative, despite its patent influence from Poe, no longer follows the American writer's steps.

Another key aspect in which Borges diverges from Poe is the justification of the detective's intellectuality. Dupin knows how to solve the mystery mainly by using his intellect. At the beginning of the narrative of 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue', Dupin is presented as an impoverished yet learned detective. 'Books

---

[56] Borges, 'La muerte y la brújula', in his *Obras completas 1923-1972*, pp. 499-507 (first publ. 1944).

[57] My definitions of the suspense novel and the thriller are based on Todorov's classification. For Todorov, the detective in the thriller loses his immunity (unlike his or her counterpart in the whodunnit). The suspense novel is more complicated. For Todorov, this type of detective fiction combines the characteristics of the whodunnit and the thriller: '[the suspense novel] keeps the mystery of the whodunnit and also the two stories, that of the past and that of the present; but it refuses to reduce the second to a simple detection of truth. [...] The two types of interest are thus united here — there is the curiosity to learn how past events are to be explained; and there is also the suspense: what will happen to the main characters? [...] Mystery has a function different from the one it had in the whodunnit: it is actually a point of departure, the main interest deriving from the second story, the one taking place in the present' (Todorov, 'The Typology of Detective Fiction', p. 50).

[...] were his sole luxuries'.[58] He is also described as a madman who likes to wander the town at night and enjoys his privacy during the daytime. His intellect is derived as much from his self-education during his isolation as his thoughtful nature. It is no wonder that Dupin is a highly imaginative person and thinks that reality is strictly organised under the laws of cause and effect. The self-consistency of Dupin's reasoning probably has some connection with his own preference for isolation and independence, as supported by Cawelti:

> This detachment from the ordinary world is a sign of the detective's eccentricity and decadence and of his particular analytic brilliance and insight, which above all takes the form of an ability to read the hidden motives of men.[59]

He is portrayed as a private aristocrat who prefers to shun society. Poe appears to imply that, in isolation from society, one is capable of reaching a more self-contained system of reason.

Undoubtedly, Dupin's conclusion is always right: the world as constructed in Poe's fiction invariably abides by such rigidly causal laws and truths are not destabilised. Yet, intellectuality in Dupin is also subject to criticism. Van Leer claims that Dupin's reasoning is too strictly rigorous and in his internal process of reasoning, external and empirical reality is almost cut off:

> Dupin's method deduces its conclusions from generalised concepts rather than inducing them from observed reality. [...] Not arising from an exact observation of details, Dupin's reasoning depends on the logical inevitability of any thought process.[60]

---

[58] Poe, 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue', p. 192.
[59] Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance*, p. 94.
[60] Van Leer, 'Detecting Truth', p. 70.

While Van Leer thinks that external and empirical reality is downplayed in Poe's narrative, Knight points out the illusion inherent in Dupin's method of detection:

> It remains an illusion, because to bring the story to a comforting resolution, Poe, like other crime fiction writers, selected and arranged material that was more tractable than real life. By doing thus, he created a false dialectic of thought and reality, a bogus problematic that could convince the newly alienated intellectual reader that his own epistemology could stand as an ontology: that all this reading and thinking was a way to live. The fictional control, the illusion and the distancing of the material were essential from the very beginning for the fable to have the necessary ideological power.[61]

The world of Poe's narrative is, therefore, nothing but an illusory space, in which elements of multiplicity that challenge the laws of cause and effect are downplayed, leaving only closely and rationally linked units that facilitate and enhance Dupin's method of detection.

It is Poe's world of supreme intellect and reason that Borges criticises in his 'La muerte y la brújula'. Taking his cue from Poe, Borges creates Lönnrot and describes him as following his own reasoning rather than heeding other clues. While Treviranus thinks that a robber mistook the rabbi's room for that of the Tetrarch of Galilee, who possessed valuable jewels, and that, as a result, the robber needed to kill the rabbi because he woke up and saw the illegal entrance, Lönnrot dismisses Treviranus's hypothesis as too simple, 'posible, pero no interesante'.[62] Borges's Dupin counterpart closely follows Dupin's steps, persuading himself that the case entails something more than a sheer accident. After hearing Treviranus's hypothesis, Lönnrot refuses to believe:

---

[61] Knight, *Form and Ideology in Crime Fiction*, p. 52.
[62] Borges, 'La muerte y la brújula', p. 500.

> En la que usted ha improvisado, interviene copiosamente el azar. He aquí un rabino muerto; yo preferiría una explicación puramente rabínica, no los imaginarios percances de un imaginario ladrón.[63]

Lönnrot prefers to believe that the rabbi was killed because of some rabbinical reason, which is more logical and consistent than Treviranus's hypothesis. In believing this, Lönnrot assumes Dupin's attitude: his process of reasoning is rigid and highly self-consistent, the ability which unmistakably has always led Dupin to his solutions. Like Dupin, Lönnrot does not believe so much in external, practical probabilities as in his own system of consistent intellectuality, no matter how improbable this may seem.

The character of Treviranus here can be compared to that of Watson in the Sherlock Holmes stories, who functions as a foil to the detective. For Yu K. Scheglov, Watson serves to enhance Holmes's character by constantly suggesting wrong solutions. In addition, Watson is equated with an average reader, whose guess is expected by the author not to be too different.[64] Like Watson, Treviranus is supposed to be giving a simple solution to enhance the complex intellectual solution advanced by Lönnrot. However, it turns out that Treviranus's hypothesis that the first murder was an accident is true. Scharlach, knowing that Lönnrot is following his own 'interesting' hypothesis, follows Lönnrot's line of reasoning and kills the detective in the end by luring him to believe that his hypothesis is right and getting one step ahead of him. In Poe's world, this 'interesting' hypothesis generated by an intellectual mind is always right; yet, in Borges's

---

[63] Borges, 'La muerte y la brújula', p. 500.

[64] 'Watson [...] is a character who in all respects represents the average reader and even, perhaps, flatters him a little by his extreme 'simplicity', obtuseness and mediocrity. Watson is the vox populi' (Scheglov, 'Towards a Description of Detective Story Structure', pp. 63-64).

world it causes the reader to question the status of reality, to put the reader in doubt as to the existence of causality in nature.

What distinguishes Borges's twist is not so much its innovation as its philosophical implications behind such a shift. For Poe, chance never occurs in his detective stories: every event follows a strict pattern of cause and effect. However, 'La muerte y la brújula', like 'El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan' discussed in the previous chapter, reminds the reader that in fact chance does intervene in the pattern of reality, so much so that some chains of cause and effect are engendered by a sheer chance happening. In fact, what takes place in 'La muerte y la brújula' originates from a contingent murder. According to Svend Østergård:

> Lönnrot wants to expel the element of chance from the level of the act ('*In the hypothesis that you propose chance intervenes copiously*', he says to Treviranus), but he does not see that his own intervention is an element of chance.[65]

Therefore, it is the detective's failure to recognise this contingency and his tendency to believe in the obligation of reality to be interesting that lead him to his unwitting death at the end.[66]

Contrary to Lönnrot's belief, chance does in fact intervene copiously in detective fiction. What the writer sets up as a premise, the occurrence of the mystery itself,

---

[65] Svend Østergård, 'The Unconscious of Representation ('Death and the Compass')', *Variaciones Borges*, 1 (1996), 101-12 (p. 108). His italics.

[66] Lönnrot's faith in the iron-clad laws of cause and effect leads José Fernández Vega to the conclusion that Lönnrot is a Platonic detective: 'El personaje se convierte, pues, en una idea platónica, exceptuado como está de cualquier determinación espacio-temporal que lo volviese objecto de un conocimiento sensible. [...] personajes como Lönnrot pertenecen a una especie privilegiada la cual, aunque sometida a las exigencias del mundo real, mantiene una relación especial con la Idea arquetípica singular cuya imagen evocan' (Fernández Vega, 'Una campaña estética. Borges y la narrativa policial', *Variaciones Borges*, 1 (1996), 27-66 (p. 52)).

is nothing but chance.[67] From there, the writer then develops a logical web. Borges here reveals an act of writing *par excellence* where chance plays an essential role at the beginning of every detective story. For Poe, the world of detective fiction is explicable by supreme reason and intellect. Even though his world of fiction is a pure fantasy, it is a fantasy whose base is built up logically. Poe of course deals with imagination; yet it is by no means fanciful, but carefully crafted. Borges, on the contrary, questions the efficacy of reason and intellect in explaining world phenomena. Since chance also invariably comes into play in fiction, the reader is required to interrogate whether the world of fiction is actually explicable by reason alone.

Even though in Poe's detective stories such a rigid pattern of cause and effect is constructed, it would be a mistake to conclude that he never contemplates this notion of chance. In one of his Dupin tales, 'The Mystery of Marie Rogêt', he extensively discusses the issue:

> The history of human knowledge has so uninterruptedly shown that to collateral, or incidental, or accidental events we are indebted for the most numerous and most valuable discoveries, that it has at length become necessary, in any prospective view of improvement, to make not only large, but the largest allowances for inventions that shall arise by chance, and quite out of the range of ordinary expectation. It is no longer philosophical to base, upon what has been, a vision of what is to be. *Accident* is admitted as a portion of the substructure. We make chance a matter of absolute calculation. We subject the unlooked for and unimagined, to the mathematical *formulae* of the schools.[68]

---

[67] 'Scharlach begins from a contingency because there has to be a first, arbitrary datum in any fiction; thereafter contingency is eliminated and the plot proceeds with mathematical rigour' (John Sturrock, *Paper Tigers*, p. 129).

[68] Poe, 'The Mystery of Marie Rogêt', in *The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. by James A. Harrison, 16 vols (New York: AMS, 1965), v, p. 39. His italics.

Despite Poe's admission that the intrusion of chance prevails, the world-view of his fiction is far different from that of Borges. This world has its own inherent order and every event in this world, be it accidental or causal, can always be accountable by a deterministic pattern:

> For Poe, the detective story reflects a preexistent divine order from which man is excluded by erroneous methods of investigation and inadequate habits of perception. Order depends on a certain aesthetic distance from the observed object and a certain obliqueness of observation [...]. To perceptual organs blinded by the fragmentary details salvaged by empiricism, existence may appear as a confusion, but order, proportion, harmony — summed up by the Platonic *μονσικη* — are the attributes that ultimately define Poe's universe.[69]

Borges, on the contrary, doubts the existence of such a rigidly constructed universe. His universe is an open-ended one, where an individual is destined to go astray, unlikely to find any exit. It is Borges's belief that a divine order may not exist after all; what exists in its stead is perhaps human beings' own mythical constructions, totally human yet imagined and labelled as divine. Bleak as it is, this worldly schema does not guarantee any teleological meaning. In Borges's detective story, the detective does not find any solution to the mystery. In fact, the mystery is not there at the beginning; it is begotten by the detective's own reasoning when Red Scharlach, learning that Lönnrot considers the murder to have a rabbinical explanation, creates a rabbinical mystery to trap the detective. Red Scharlach's hatred for Lönnrot is, according to J. Hillis Miller, closely linked to this prison house of reason:

---

[69] Maurice J. Bennett, 'The Detective Fiction of Poe and Borges', *Comparative Literature*, 35 (1983), 262-75 (p. 266).

> Scharlach hated Lönnrot for nearly killing him and for imprisoning his brother. He hates him also as a representative of fatuous belief in law and order, for example the belief that the world makes sense, that there will be a rabbinical explanation for a rabbinical murder, that events form a configuration which can be read as the signs of a secret meaning inscribed within them.[70]

Red Scharlach's challenge to Lönnrot's belief in reason and human intellect as a whole is also reflected structurally. In this respect, Bernard J. McGuirk draws an interesting diagram to distinguish Borges's tale from other detective stories (including Poe's), which follow the pattern:

enigma → pursuit → solution

Borges's detective story also follows this standard pattern at the beginning; nevertheless, as the story progresses, the traditional pattern is challenged, thereby resulting in a pattern reversal:

solution (Treviranus's 'error') → pursuit (rabbinical explanation)
→ enigma (labyrinth)[71]

The reversal of the pattern signals that Lönnrot's intellectuality proves to be his undoing in this dismal universe of human constructions. This self-destructive act, for David Grossvogel, is sinister in the extreme since for him 'what could be more devilish than to entrap a detective within the web of a maze of his own making?'[72] Thus it can be said that, for Borges, ultimate meaning is no longer

---

[70] J. Hillis Miller, 'Figure in 'Death and the Compass': Red Scharlach as Hermeneut', *Dieciocho*, 10 (1987), 53-61 (p. 54).
[71] Bernard J. McGuirk, 'Seminar on Jorge Luis Borges's 'Death and the Compass'', *Renaissance and Modern Studies*, 27 (1983), 47-60 (p. 57).
[72] David I. Grossvogel, *Mystery and Its Fictions: From Oedipus to Agatha Christie* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), p. 142.

retrievable; what stands in its place is rather a reflection or a variation of the absolute constructed by human beings themselves.

Why is there such a vast discrepancy between Poe's and Borges's stories? The similarity between Lönnrot and Dupin is indisputable: Borges states in 'La muerte y la brújula' that 'Lönnrot se creía un puro razonador, un Auguste Dupin'.[73] The allusion to Poe's fictive character is obvious; yet one never knows whether Lönnrot actually knows Dupin through books or through personal contact or whether Borges just mentions the name of Dupin directly to the reader, to make sure the reader understands what kind of personality Borges's detective is. Nevertheless, what is remarkable in that phrase is not only the direct allusion. The fact that Lönnrot *believes himself a pure reasoner* signifies that he is no longer in Poe's era. The narrator treats the description rather ironically: it sounds as if Borges's detective were hypocritical and pretending to be a pure reasoner like Auguste Dupin.[74] To be a pure reasoner is perhaps impractical and has long gone past its day; it is doubly ironic when in the end the reader finds out that Lönnrot meets his death because of his fondness for intellect and reason.

It is not without intention that the murderer of Lönnrot bears a similar name to his, Red Scharlach. Parts of both names point to the colour red.[75] Lönnrot[76] needs

---

[73] Borges, 'La muerte y la brújula', p. 499.

[74] McGuirk argues that this phrase points to the impurity of Lönnrot's character: 'The detective-genius Erik Lönnrot 'believed himself to be a pure reasoner, an Auguste Dupin' but, since he is in a *tradition* of Dupin-like detectives, is not a pure reasoner but an imitative (or *impure*) reasoner [...]' (McGuirk, 'Seminar on Jorge Luis Borges's 'Death and the Compass'', p. 54).

[75] 'In a note to the tale Borges says, 'the end syllable of Lönnrot means red in German, and Red Scharlach is also translatable, in German, as Red Scarlet'. Elsewhere Borges tells us that *Lönnrot* is Swedish, but neglects to add that in Swedish the word *lönn* is a prefix meaning 'secret', 'hidden', or 'illicit'. Thus Lönnrot, the secret or hidden red, pursues and is pursued by his double Red Scharlach (Red Scarlet), the doubly red.' (John T. Irwin, *The Mystery to a Solution: Poe, Borges, and the Analytic Detective Story* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), p. 30).

[76] J. Hillis Miller argues that the detective's name is derived from the name of Finnish philologist Elias Lönnrot (1802-1884), who thought the lost Finnish epic, the *Kalevala*, could be reconstructed from fragments dispersed throughout Finland. See J. Hillis Miller, 'Figure in Borges's 'Death and the Compass'', p. 55.

someone who possesses this passion for intellect to be able to catch up with him, and obviously Red Scharlach[77] does. Towards the end of the story when Lönnrot goes to the fourth point of the rhombus, Triste-le-Roy, the description of the deserted hotel prophetically hints at the notion of the double:

> Vista de cerca, la casa de la quinta de Triste-le-Roy abundaba en inútiles simetrías y en repeticiones maniáticas: a una Diana glacial en un nicho lóbrego correspondía en un segundo nicho otra Diana; un balcón se reflejaba en otro balcón; dobles escalinatas se abrían en doble balaustrada. Un Hermes de dos caras proyectaba una sombra monstruosa.[78]

In the same manner, in 'The Purloined Letter'[79] Dupin is able to understand where Minister D— has hidden the letter because both of them are able to follow the same train of thought. This necessity to retrace the counterpart's steps is stressed when Dupin even says that he 'should like very well to know the precise character of [the Minister's] thoughts.'[80] And one also wonders whether the name of the Minister is perhaps Dupin. The double, therefore, is an interesting theme in detective fiction because this type of fiction involves a great number of cases in which the detective needs to read the mind of the criminal.

By contrast, in Borges's story, the plot turns the other way around: it is the criminal who reads the mind of the detective. Scharlach can be seen as Lönnrot's double in various respects. For one thing, the ending sees the two characters get even when Scharlach is revenged upon Lönnrot for putting his brother in prison.

---

[77] Apart from the connection with the colour red, the name Scharlach can also be associated with the name of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's master sleuth, Sherlock Holmes. See also Hernández Martín, *Readers and Labyrinths*, p. 92. Hernández Martín also draws the reader's attention to the fact that one of Doyle's detective stories is named *A Study in Scarlet*.

[78] Borges, 'La muerte y la brújula', p. 504-5.

[79] Poe, 'The Purloined Letter', in his *The Fall of the House of Usher and Other Writings*, pp. 330-49 (first publ. 1845).

[80] Poe, 'The Purloined Letter', p. 348.

In that incident, Scharlach was shot in the stomach and, while recovering, was feverish for nine days and nights. During this febrile interval, Scharlach was a victim of hallucinations. One of his fiery dreams is the double:

> me arrasaba la fiebre, el odioso Jano bifronte que mira los ocasos y las auroras daba horror a mi ensueño y a mi vigilia. Llegué a abominar de mi cuerpo, llegué a sentir que dos ojos, dos manos, dos pulmones, son tan monstruosos como dos caras. [...] En esas noches yo juré por el dios que ve con dos caras y por todos los dioses de la fiebre y de los espejos tejer un laberinto en torno del hombre que había encarcelado a mi hermano.[81]

Revenge is the main motive for Scharlach to kill his double, and when successful, it means Scharlach is able to settle the score, i.e. to be equal to his counterpart, after Lönnrot was ahead of him. It is no coincidence that the theme of revenge is also found in Poe's 'The Purloined Letter'. Minister D— wronged Dupin once and Dupin's attempt to find the letter the Minister is concealing is thus an act of retaliation. In addition, functioning as the double also means that Lönnrot's existence defines Scharlach's and vice versa. In this intersubjectivity, that is, the system of interdependence, the two personages are indispensable in the formation of the geometrical patterns of the labyrinth, not only the rhomboidal one that Scharlach creates but also the single and linear one that Lönnrot suggests. Like other detective stories, the psychological traits of both characters are downplayed and what takes their place is their positions in the tale and how their positions create meaning.[82]

---

[81] Borges, 'La muerte y la brújula', p. 505-6.

[82] 'The text *consumes* the ego of Lönnrot and, in the same consummation, the ego of Scharlach. The actant which survives has no psychoanalisable being ('I am not') since it has no identity but as the 'playing of my thought'' (McGuirk, 'Seminar on Jorges Luis Borges's 'Death and the Compass'', p. 58. His italics). McGuirk analyses the double in light of Jacques Lacan's celebrated sentence, 'Je ne suis pas là où je suis le jouet de ma pensée'.

In Poe's fiction, the mystery is solved in the end through the use of intellect and it would be unlikely to enter a reader's mind that Dupin could ever fall victim. Nevertheless, Borges's detective is killed despite the fact that *and* because he possesses Dupin's intellectual vigour. The paradox is obvious: the mastery normally helping the detective to solve the mystery now turns against him and causes his downfall. For Borges, the world can no longer be explained purely by reason and intellect as chance intervenes too much. The pattern of reality once considered to be demystified simply by the use of reason is now more complex than ever as the existence of reason becomes another chance added to it. To put this in perspective, if chance in 'El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan' disrupts the cognitive patterns by showing how these patterns cannot accommodate its emergence, its role in 'La muerte y la brújula' is similar. Here chance is presented as an intrusive element which interrupts causality, the pattern of which could lead to a recognition of ultimate meaning or pre-determined design. In this aspect, Borges's world is very different from that of Poe, as it is not governed by a series of cause and effect as elements of chance emerge at every level. Furthermore, as in the case of 'Emma Zunz', it is not possible to trace back to original truths because causality as a deterministic framework is seen to be unreliable. The search for meaning is not only impractical but futile, since it is shown to be essentially unattainable owing to the loss of a recognisable order.

The Disappearance of Hermes: Calvino's Deferral of Demystification

If the search for order and absolute truth is discredited by Borges because of the interference of human beings in causality, Calvino stresses the continuation of mystery and the deferral of demystification that happens in the search process as a result of the void at the centre of the mystery. This can be seen in Calvino's *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore*, in which he exploits the pattern of detective fiction and ridicules its innocence while imitating it. In this novel, the Reader (il

Lettore) functions as a detective, hoping to find a solution to a mystery surrounding strange incidents that preclude him from finishing ten novels. As we have seen from Chapter One, the novel begins with the Reader about to read a new novel by Calvino called *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore*. Subsequently, he finds out that only the beginning of Calvino's new novel keeps repeating. He then goes back to the bookshop and asks for another copy, which, to his surprise, turns out to be another book altogether. However, the Reader cannot finish this book either because, after almost finishing the first chapter, he discovers that blank pages are interspersed through the rest of the novel. He then goes to see a Cimmerian professor who is supposed to know the novel he was reading and who perhaps could supply another copy of the novel. However, despite the Reader's description, the professor brings up another novel, which again stops abruptly before reaching its end because its author sank into a deep depression at the time of writing. On one level, these unfinished novels can be seen as frustrated attempts by the Reader to interpret textual meaning, the production of which traditionally involves the continuity of narrative from the beginning to the end. Like Poe's deterministic universe, the narrative continuity is seen as a way to help guide the reader to gain a sense of order. Yet the Reader in *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore* is aware of textual chaos, in which absolute textual meaning is destabilised, since the continuity of those novels he encounters in the course of the narrative is always interrupted.

The criminal of this novel is also worthy of a detailed analysis. As discussed in Chapter One, Calvino's narrative implies that the translator Ermes Marana may perhaps be the mastermind behind the confusion of the first few unfinished books that the Reader has read. The attention of the Reader is now on the elusive figure of Marana, whose current project is to translate a work of Silas Flannery, an author in distress. However, judging from Marana's letters Mr Cavedagna has given to the Reader, he perceives that Marana is both treacherous and elusive. It

is possible that Marana may be a spy, or 'agente doppio o triplo o quadruplo',[83] involving two organisations: the New York-based OEPHLW (Organisation for the Electronic Production of Literary Works) and the APO (Aprocryphal Power Organisation), both of whom have vested interests in Flannery's manuscript.[84] The situation becomes more complicated and confusing when the APO people who chase after Marana tell him that they are part of the Wing of Shadow, whose operation is opposed to the Wing of Light. Marana himself knows these two groups too well:

> [...] Wing of Shadow o Wing of Light, per gli uni e per gli altri io sono il traditore da eliminare, ma qui non possono farmi niente, ormai, dato che il Presidente Butamatari che garantisce loro il diritto d'asilo m'ha preso sotto la sua protezione...[85]

The juxtaposition between *traduttore* and *traditore* cannot be more obvious. If, as discussed in Chapter One, Marana is the central figure in the sense that he represents a reader as translator, this translator can also be seen here as a traitor, who has a considerable authority in both producing and manipulating textual meaning. In a way, Marana's play of textual meaning is made possible in the first place because Calvino, like Borges, entertains the idea that original meaning is viewed as indeterminate. Marana himself is against the linking of authorship with proprietorship. According to Flannery's memoir:

---

[83] Calvino, *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore*, p. 726.

[84] The OEPHLW hopes to complete Flannery's novel for him by using computers to develop textual elements with perfect fidelity to his stylistic and conceptual models, while the motives of the APO are not clear. According to the Reader: 'Ma perché mai i pirati dell'APO volevano impadronirsi di quel manoscritto? Scorri i fogli cercando una spiegazione, ma trovi soprattutto le vanterie di Marana [...]' (Calvino, *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore*, p. 727). Marana himself claims that he founded the APO himself: 'Nessuno sa che l'Organizzazione del Potere Apocrifo da me fondata ha avuto un senso finché il mio ascendente ha impedito che cadesse sotto l'influenza di gurù poco attendibili' (Calvino, *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore*, p. 726).

[85] Calvino, *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore*, p. 727.

> [Marana ha] continuato a espormi le sue teorie, secondo le quali l'autore di ciascun libro è un personaggio fittizio che l'autore esistente inventa per farne l'autore delle sue finzioni.[86]

Since the repositioning of the author makes impossible the search for ultimate meaning, Marana is always seen as a traitor. His sly existence testifies to the nature of reading itself: it is reading as Ricoeur's 'appropriation', not reading as retrieving the author's meaning. Textual meaning is dispersed, multiple since it can no longer be pinned down or restrained by the authorial figure.

Even though the Reader learns more and more about Marana, Marana always eludes him. Throughout the novel, the Reader never has a chance to see Marana face-to-face or even to talk to him. Even the authorial figure Silas Flannery does not know where Marana is although he likes to meet the translator again to discuss how to flood the world with apocrypha. Marana remains a mystery even after the novel finishes as the narrative does not supply any further details regarding his existence. Ultimately, the elusive character of Marana is deemed as necessary:

> Qualcosa che ci sfugge deve pur restare... Perché il potere abbia un oggetto su cui esercitarsi, uno spazio in cui allungare le sue braccia... Finché so che al mondo c'è qualcuno che fa dei giochi di prestigio solo per amore del gioco [...] posso convincermi che il mondo continua...[87]

Marana thus represents a mystery one cannot avoid encountering in every act of reading. The elusive figure of Marana points towards the indeterminacy of absolute meaning. Like Red Scharlach in Borges's 'La muerte y la brújula',

---

[86] Calvino, *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore*, p. 788.
[87] Calvino, *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore*, p. 850.

Marana does not believe that the universe has any primal truth or ultimate meaning. Both of them believe that the meaning of the universe is nothing but a production of human construction, of a reader interpreting an anonymous text.

Nevertheless, it is a mistake to think that what Marana aims to do is to downplay the figure of the author; on the contrary, even though the notion of the author is only part of a human wish to attain a single, correct meaning, it shows how much the reader relies on this wishful thinking in determining the meaning of the text. Being able to control and manipulate the author, for Marana, is equal to having powers to appropriate text and endow it with desired meaning. Therefore, like Red Scharlach, Marana exposes us to the idea of the universe, which does not possess any pre-determined meaning or design, but which is constructed and manipulated by human beings. *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore* is analogous to 'La muerte y la brújula' in the sense that both of them recognise the empty state at the core of the universe, the location where ultimate meaning is supposed to lie hidden.

Desire and Detection: The Reader and the Other Reader

Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore is also interesting in terms of involvement and desire. As opposed to Poe's Dupin, the protagonist of Calvino's novel (the Reader) loses his immunity and is subject to various incidents in the narrative. Like Lönnrot, he becomes an ordinary character in the novel and loses the privilege of detachment normally offered to the detective in the whodunnit. The detective in Calvino's novel is addressed throughout as *you*, reminding the reader to assume the role of protagonist in his novel, where the detective faces various kinds of risks, in his attempt to unmask Marana.[88] Since, like Borges, Calvino

[88] This is against Todorov's belief that the detective in the thriller should not be equated with the reader, since he or she lacks the capability for an independent observation of reality. See Todorov, 'The Typology of Detective Fiction', p. 47.

uses detective fiction as an instrument to communicate his attitude towards the world, in his choice of addressing the protagonist with the second person pronoun, the notion of independent observation is severely brought into question. Is it possible that the actual reader, identifying himself or herself as the main protagonist of his novel, can observe reality in an independent and impartial manner? The issue of identification is problematised by Calvino:

> Il lettore diventa una figura interna al romanzo che legge. La soglia realtà-finzione è trasgredita in senso contrario a quello dell'immaginario tradizionale. Non più il personaggio fittizio prende realtà nel lettore reale; ma il lettore reale s'irrealiza nel personaggio fittizio.[89]

When looked at from another angle, it can be interpreted that absolute objectivity in reading can never be attained. The reader identifies himself or herself with one or more characters of a novel, in the same way that human beings cannot retain their complete objective stance towards their object of study, the issue which has been discussed in detail in the previous chapter. The reader always, to a certain extent, has an emotional tie with text.

The challenge to objectivity and the celebration of emotional involvement can be seen at the textual level as Calvino introduces love into his novel. Love, playing a crucial role in this narrative, drives the detectives and the criminal to implement their causes. The main female character, the Other Reader (la Lettrice), is the object of desire of the Reader (il Lettore), Flannery, and Marana alike: she functions as a mythic female figure whom male characters try to understand yet sorrowfully fail. The Other Reader, Ludmilla, is in fact no less mysterious than Marana. The Reader fell in love with her at first sight when they

---

[89] Franco Brioschi, and Costanzo di Girolamo, eds, *Manuale di letteratura italiana storia per generi e problemi*, 4 vols (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1996), iv, p. 613.

first met in a bookshop. According to Flannery's diary, Ludmilla once visited him and the writer was very much attracted to her. Even Marana was once living with Ludmilla, according to Irnerio. Therefore, she becomes a point where the three main characters intersect, a central point to which desire leads. Like Treviranus,[90] Ludmilla draws the three main characters together in Calvino's narrative as she becomes the centre of their attention. She is in fact an embodiment of the actual reader *par excellence*, which the author, the translator, and the critic alike, endeavour to fathom, unfortunately with no avail. Throughout the narrative, like Marana, she is elusive and it is always difficult to find where she is. She is hardly to be found at home; throughout the narrative she is described as hiding or staying in a secluded place, e.g. in a professor's room or down in a valley in Switzerland.

Ludmilla's taste for reading also varies from chapter to chapter. In Chapter Two, she prefers 'i romanzi [...] che [gli] fanno entrare subito in un mondo dove ogni cosa precisa, concreta, ben specificata'.[91] In Chapter Five, she states her preference for the novel that 'dovrebbe avere come forza motrice solo la voglia di raccontare, d'accumulare storie su storie, senza pretendere d'importi una visione del mondo, ma solo di farti assistere alla propria crescita, come una pianta, un aggrovigliarsi come di rami e di foglie'.[92] Yet, in Chapter Eight, the novels that attract her most 'sono quelli che creano un'illusione di trasparenza intorno a un nodo di rapporti umani che è quanto di più oscuro, crudele e perverso'.[93] Her constantly changing taste contributes to her mutable and slippery character, always escaping whenever anyone wishes to detain her.

---

[90] McGuirk argues that the name TREviranus is itself significant since he is a character which in a sense enables the logic of the triangle before Lönnrot challenges his thought and proposes the rhombus. See McGuirk, 'Seminar on Jorge Luis Borges's 'Death and the Compass'', p. 57.

[91] Calvino, *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore*, p. 639.

[92] Calvino, *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore*, p. 699.

[93] Calvino, *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore*, p. 801. Flannery himself perceives this change in her taste. In his memoir, he notes that 'l'incontentabilità mi pare la caratteristica di Ludmilla: da un giorno all'altro le sue preferenze mi sembra che cambino e che oggi rispondano solo alla sua inquietudine' (Calvino, *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore*, p. 801).

However, interestingly enough, the short stories following the framed stories always correspond to her ephemeral wishes.

In his diary, Flannery expresses his anguish at his unfulfilled wish to satisfy Ludmilla's attention. Before sitting down to write, he always gazes at the figure of a young lady (presumably Ludmilla) completely absorbed in her reading in a deck chair. He wishes the text she is reading could be written by him:

> Alle volte mi prende un desiderio assurdo: che la frase che sto per scrivere sia quella che la donna sta leggendo nello stesso momento. L'idea mi suggestiona talmente che mi convinco che è vero: scrivo la frase in fretta, mi alzo, vado alla finestra, punto il cannocchiale per controllare l'effetto della mia frase nel suo sguardo, nella piega delle sue labbra, nella sigaretta che accende, negli spostamenti del suo corpo sulla sedia a sdraio, nelle gambe che s'accavallano o si distendono.[94]

It is not surprising that his desire to satisfy her wish subsequently becomes his desire for her body: textual desire and sexual desire in this case are complementary. In other words, the text of the author is not completed until the reader fills its gap in his or her act of reading.[95] The main, if not sole, purpose of the writer in writing any text is for the text to be read. Taking a step further, Wiley Feinstein maintains that the doctrinal core of the novel is the author's wish for personal omnipotence and grandeur:

---

[94] Calvino, *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore*, p. 778.

[95] 'Le parole dello scrittore sono aspirate, e perciò condizionate, dal vuoto che l'attesa del lettore costituisce' (Cesare Segre, 'Se una notte d'inverno un romanziere sognasse un aleph di dieci colori', p. 154).

> Authors [...] all have a megalomaniac desire to seduce and dominate the readers. [...] Readers, in their demanding capriciousness and insatiability, are as impossible to live with as they are to live without.[96]

The success of the author depends on the reader to a considerable extent. Even Marana falls victim to desire: the mastermind behind the literary scam once lived with Ludmilla and for some reason they separated, and his sinister acts of mixing up literary works are somehow caused by his wish to win her back. According to Porphyritch, who is the last person in Calvino's narrative who has seen and captured Marana, these subversive acts 'non era pazzia la sua; forse solo disperazione; la scommessa con la donna [Ludmilla] era perduta da un pezzo [...]'.[97] This understanding leads to Porphyritch's decision to let Marana escape:

> L'ho lasciato scappare. Una finta evasione, un finto espatrio clandestino, ed è tornato a far perdere le sue tracce. Credo di riconoscere la sua mano, ogni tanto, nei materiali che mi capitano sott'occhio... La sua qualità è migliorata... Ora pratica la mistificazione per la mistificazione... La nostra forza ormai su di lui non ha più presa.[98]

The fact that Porphyritch allows Marana to flee bespeaks Porphyritch's understanding of Marana's nature. The ending of Calvino's narrative in a sense reflects the triumph of desire.[99] Porphyritch thinks that Marana's destiny is finished since he cannot win the object of his affection back, hence the continuation of his futile project. Ultimately, the denouement of *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore* is an insightful lesson in reading and writing. Marana,

---

[96] Wiley Feinstein, 'The Doctrinal Core of *If on a winter's night a traveller*', p. 152.
[97] Calvino, *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore*, p. 849.
[98] Calvino, *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore*, p. 850.
[99] See also Paolo Fabbri, 'Le trame del Bagatto: Arcani narrativi e orditi del dire', in *Narratori dell'invisibile: Simposio in memoria di Italo Calvino*, ed. by Beppe Cottafavi and Maurizio Magri (Modena: Mucchi, 1987), pp. 23-33 (p. 24).

by gaining authorial control over the text, hopes that he can manipulate what Ludmilla is reading; however, this attempt proves to be fruitless since Ludmilla always manages to read something which is not there. Marana also tells Porphyritch about his frustrated attempt: 'Ho capito i miei limiti. [...] Nella lettura avviene qualcosa su cui non ho potere'.[100] Reading as the search for meaning therefore signals the triumph of desire over any attempt to control or manipulate the text on the part of the author or the translator. In addition, since desire is for an impossible love object, the acts of reading of the two main protagonists in the novel can never be completed, hence the unfinished ten short stories and the incomplete title itself.

Meaning and Indeterminacy: Celebration or Nostalgia?

Borges's and Calvino's detective stories serve as parodic reflections of the tradition of detective fiction as a whole.[101] Etymologically, the word 'parody' has its root in the Greek noun 'parodia', meaning 'counter-song'.[102] Yet, when looked at closely, the meaning of the term is ambiguous, since the prefix 'para' can mean both 'counter' or 'against' as well as 'beside'. Linda Hutcheon, taking this direction, posits that parody conveys a sense of repetition with difference. She defines parody as:

> a form of imitation, but imitation characterised by ironic inversion, not always at the expense of the parodied text. [...] Parody is, in another formulation, repetition with critical distance, which marks difference rather than similarity.[103]

---

[100] Calvino, *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore*, p. 850.
[101] For Jerry Varsava, their parodic narratives are regarded as 'generic counterfeiting', aiming at confounding the reader's expectation. See Varsava, 'The Last Fictions: Calvino's Borgesian Odysseys', in *Borges and his Successors: The Borgesian Impact on Literature and the Arts*, ed. by Edna Aizenberg (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1990), pp. 183-99 (p. 187).
[102] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (London and New York: Methuen, 1985), p. 32.
[103] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody*, p. 6.

Parody then implies both sameness and difference at the same time, with an emphasis on the latter. In the same manner, Borges and Calvino partially imitate the form of detective fiction such as the introduction of mystery and a series of inquests conducted by a detective. Borges even builds the character of his detective out of Poe's Dupin, as his use of reason is a direct allusion to Dupin's. Yet their endings are far from traditional. In Borges's story, the detective finds his own death by his use of reason, while Calvino's criminal just gets off scot-free.[104]

By twisting the endings of their stories, Borges and Calvino convey their ideological messages not just for detective fiction but for literature as a whole. Detective fiction is generally regarded as a triumph of reason over chaos, a long-brewed product of the Enlightenment. From Poe to Conan Doyle, the detective had been provided with a god-like intelligence and legendary analytical powers that almost always helped him or her to find a solution to every mystery. For Fernández Vega, the detection is in a sense a way to explore the world with the privileged use of reasoning:

> Investigar es una acción estratégica dirigida a descubrir por medios racionales. El mundo carece de cualquier otro significado, es una ocasión para ejercitar el entendimiento y para probar los razonamientos que descubren cadenas causales: una alegoría estética de la filosofía racionalista. [...] El detective es un mero instrumento de la razón unilateral y ello explica su escasa densidad humana como personaje y su gran capacidad de trasvestimiento [...].[105]

---

[104] Linda Hutcheon also agrees that Calvino's text is parodic in its nature. 'The entire novel', she claims, 'is structured parodically on the genres of the detective story and thriller' (Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody*, p. 90).

[105] Fernández Vega, 'Una campaña estética. Borges y la narrativa policial', pp. 50-51.

Moreover, detective fiction also represents a symbolic conflict between order and chaos. For Cawelti, this is clearly shown in the ways detective writers choose to present settings:

> [...] the contrast between the locked room or the lonely country house and the outside world constitutes a symbolic representation of the relation between order and chaos, between surface rationality and hidden depths of guilt. [...] By solving the secret of the locked room, the detective brings the threatening external world under control so that he and his assistant can return to the peaceful serenity of his library, or can restore the pleasant social order of the country house.[106]

Thus, traditional detective fiction marks a return to the prevailing social *status quo* after a brief period of confusion and muddle, in a way representing the triumph of order over chaos. As a form of parody, both 'La muerte y la brújula' and *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore* attempt to stipulate that this is not always the case. In reality, reason may not operate effectively in every case, either because reality may be too complicated to be grasped by reason or because there may not be any system of cause and effect at work out there at all. At any rate, human reason is shown to be defective in its claim to interpret natural phenomena. In addition, its limits are also highlighted, especially because reason is nothing but a product of human projection, a wish to impose order on the stochastic world. The detective stories of Borges and Calvino, or what Cawelti negatively terms 'antidetective stories',[107] are a manifestation that order can no longer prevail over chaos:

---

[106] Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance*, p. 97.
[107] Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance*, p. 137.

> Like Poe, [...] Borges [has] a deep sense of the chaos of the world, but unlike Poe, [he] cannot assuage that sense by turning to the mechanical certainty, the hyper-logic of the classical detective story. [...] instead of familiarity, it gives strangeness, a strangeness which more often than not is the result of jumbling the well known patterns of classical detective stories. Instead of reassuring, they disturb. They are not an escape, but an attack.[108]

In other words, Borges's tale exposes the reader to the fact that the causal laws cannot account for every chain of events. If Borges's narrative challenges the use of reason as a key to unlock the secrets of the universe, desire also makes the matter more complicated in Calvino's novel. His narrative brings to light the fact that the objective locus is never available since desire is implicit and tends to vitiate the human capacity for reasoning. Both of their fictions impel readers to acknowledge that contingencies take place and that there is an involvement of desire. As a consequence, ultimate truth or meaning cannot exist in their universe. For them, the production of meaning is open-ended, dependent upon the reader's interaction with text. The reader plays a key part in producing textual meaning because, as the universe is seen as a human construct rather than a pre-determined entity, meaning is also viewed as constructed by the reader. The author as God no longer provides control over text.

Nevertheless, the attitudes of Borges and Calvino towards these reconfigurations are disparate. Calvino in *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore* appears to be playful and light-hearted. The dispersal of meaning is regarded as necessary yet celebratory, as evinced by the character of Ludmilla, who is elusive but noble. In the course of the narrative, she is not an active participant (as compared to the Reader himself) in the search, but her existence pervades the text so much that

---

[108] Michael Holquist, 'Whodunit and Other Questions: Metaphysical Detective Stories in Post-War Fiction', *New Literary History*, 3 (1971-1972), 135-156 (p. 155).

she unwittingly becomes the centre of the text, the point at which all main characters converge. Yet Ludmilla is not portrayed as treacherous or manipulative like her sister, Lotaria, who tries to control textual meaning. According to Flannery:

> Dai suoi discorsi [di Lotaria] molto circostanziati, mi sono fatto l'idea d'un lavoro condotto seriamente: ma i miei libri visti attraverso i suoi occhi mi risultano irriconoscibili. Non metto in dubbio che questa Lotaria (si chiama così) li abbia letti coscienziosamente, ma credo li abbia letti solo per trovarci quello di cui era già convinta prima di leggerli.[109]

Lotaria's reading is seriously critical and she seems to forget the pleasure of passive reading. Her reading is tendentious and the only meaning she finds is what she was looking for beforehand. Lotaria is convinced of the determinacy of ultimate meaning and she is determined to discover it. That is the reason why, for her, all textual details, be they authorial intention or biographical notes, are important.

Ludmilla, by contrast, enjoys passive reading and does not want to know the author personally. For her, the notion of literary creation is compared to a natural process: 'Questo modello ideale è quello [...] dell'autore che fa i libri 'come una pianta di zucca fa le zucche''.[110] For Ludmilla, literary creation should not concern any notion of ownership; the author should be regarded only as a textual mouthpiece. When she talks to Flannery, she also confirms this view:

> I romanzi di Silas Flannery sono qualcosa di così ben caratterizzato... sembra che siano già lì da prima, da prima che lei li scrivesse, in tutti i loro dettagli...

---

[109] Calvino, *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore*, p. 793.
[110] Calvino, *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore*, p. 798.

> Sembra che passino attraverso di lei, servendosi di lei che sa scrivere perché qualcuno che li scrive ci deve pur essere...[111]

According to her, textual meaning should not belong to the authorial figure, as it should be free and the reader should play a part in constructing it. Apart from the authorial authority, Ludmilla also challenges another pitfall in reading, made manifest by Marana: if the treacherous translator attempts to show her the void at the centre of textual meaning, it is always possible for Ludmilla to encounter meaning. Textual meaning is, in other words, inexhaustible:

> Per questa donna [Ludmilla] [...] leggere vuol dire spogliarsi d'ogni intenzione e d'ogni partito preso, per essere pronta a cogliere una voce che si fa sentire quando meno ci s'aspetta, una voce che viene non si sa da dove, da qualche parte al di là del libro, al di là dell'autore, al di là delle convenzioni della scrittura: dal non detto, da quello che il mondo non ha ancora detto di sé e non ha ancora le parole per dire.[112]

For Ludmilla, the dispersal of meaning is a cause for celebration since it means the triumph of the reader in generating meaning, despite textual control or manipulation by the author or the translator. Ludmilla can be viewed as a positive embodiment of textual indeterminacy. Calvino, by way of Ludmilla, perceives that textual dispersal does not signify the loss of ultimate meaning so much as it marks a positive repositioning of the reader and a recognition of the role of desire. It should be noted here that *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore* ends in a marriage between the Reader and Ludmilla: 'Ora siete marito e moglie, Lettore e Lettrice [Ludmilla]. Un grande letto matrimoniale accoglie le vostre letture parallele.'[113]

---

[111] Calvino, *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore*, p. 799.
[112] Calvino, *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore*, p. 849.
[113] Calvino, *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore*, p. 870.

If the search for meaning becomes a playful and positive act for Calvino as it denotes celebratory regeneration, the loss of ultimate meaning is deplored by Borges. In 'La muerte y la brújula', the ending is tragic: Lönnrot faces his own death because of his own reasoning. The loss of original meaning means the disappearance of the pre-determined universe for Lönnrot: his reasoning turns out to be wrong and exploited by the criminal himself. In this aspect, it can be seen that Borges's story is a critique and a bleak development of Poe's detective fiction. Before Scharlach kills Lönnrot, Borges describes the scene as follows:

> Sintió un poco de frío y una tristeza impersonal, casi anónima. Ya era de noche; desde el polvoriento jardín subió el grito inútil de un pájaro.[114]

Lönnrot is depicted as feeling impersonal sorrow. His sorrow now belongs not only to himself, but also to Scharlach and to all human beings: the sorrow of perceiving that a rationalist order is forever lost and that the overwhelming human labyrinth where chance abounds is all that he can have. The bird which makes a futile cry might be Poe's raven, a final homage to Poe and a nostalgia for his causal universe. The search for original meaning which is possible in Poe's universe becomes a nostalgic, impossible act in Borges's dark world where human beings realise that ultimate meaning is forever denied to them.

While the loss of textual determinacy means the tragic death of the detective in 'La muerte y la brújula', the multiplicity of meaning can be seen as monstrous in 'El libro de arena'. The narrator, like Lönnrot, feels vertiginous as he perceives that ultimate meaning no longer exists and that textual multiplicity in fact reflects the multiplicity of self. Like 'La muerte y la brújula', the ending of 'El

[114] Borges, 'La muerte y la brújula', p. 507.

libro de arena' does not celebrate textual indeterminacy: the Book of Sand continues to haunt him and disturb his life. According to the narrator:

> Me acosté y no dormí. A las tres o cuatro de la mañana prendí la luz. Busqué el libro imposible, y volví las hojas. En una de ellas vi grabada una máscara. El ángulo llevaba una cifra, ya no sé cuál, elevada a la novena potencia.[115]

If the mask signifies unfathomable, elusive reality, the number in the page corner raised to the ninth power denotes a sense of overwhelming infinity. The narrator finds both infinity and inscrutable reality as characteristic of textual multiplicity and indeterminacy extremely disturbing. The ending sees the narrator making a decision to hide the magical book in the National Library, where he no longer wishes to visit. While textual indeterminacy conveys a sense of celebratory liberation for Calvino, for Borges it seems to generate negative feelings of vertigo and despair.

[115] Borges, 'El libro de arena', p. 174.

Chapter 4

Imaginary Cities and the Geography of Limits

We have seen how Borges and Calvino deal with issues surrounding language and cognitive limits in the light of the unbridgeable gap between representation and reality as well as how they treat the motif of futile search for ultimate meaning. For the two authors, the grim recognition of the unattainable, indeterminate status of absolute reality as part of the human condition does not stop human beings from their pursuit. In this chapter, the notion of literary space, especially the city, will be the main focus as it sheds light on the reflections of Borges and Calvino upon the conflict between the multiplicity of reality and the limits of representation. To pave the way for an analysis of city space in the narratives of Borges and Calvino,[1] this chapter will begin with an analysis of the authors' fascinations with cities, based primarily upon biographical details. This will then be linked to a discussion of the city space as a site of complexity, highlighting an analogy between the city and the notion of multifarious reality and its resistance to absolute representation. Attention will then focus on character, as the notion of the *flâneur* will be used to analyse the condition of alienation of city inhabitants. This state of alienation leads to the concept of the city as labyrinth, an image which constantly recurs in the narratives of both Borges and Calvino, and the study aims to explore how the labyrinth becomes a symbol of unpresentable multiplicity of reality *par excellence*, which both fascinates and alienates human beings. Cartography will be another issue that this chapter considers, since it sheds light upon how, like reality in its original

---

[1] For more details on the relationships between literature and space, see Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. by Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969; first publ. 1958); Ricardo Guillón, 'On Space in the Novel', trans. by René de Costa, *Critical Inquiry*, 2 (1975), 11-28; Diana Festa-McCormick, *The City as Catalyst: A Study of Ten Novels* (New Jersey and London: Associated University Press, 1979); Leonard Lutwick, *The Role of Place in Literature* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1984); Richard Lehan, *The City in Literature: An Intellectual and Cultural History* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1998).

richness, the city eludes any attempt by man to capture its essence and to make sense of it. While this chapter mainly aims to portray how the two authors explore the ontological gap between representation and reality through their spatial images, it also aims to underscore the differences in their attitudes.

At the end of *Le città invisibili*, when the Khan recognises the futility of his empire and the limits of his own competence, Marco Polo suggests two ways to look at this gloomy situation (which he revealingly refers to as 'the inferno'):

> L'inferno dei viventi non è qualcosa che sarà; se ce n'è uno, è quello che è già qui, l'inferno che abitiamo tutti i giorni, che formiamo stando insieme. Due modi ci sono per non soffrirne. Il primo riesce facile a molti: accettare l'inferno e diventarne parte fino al punto di non vederlo più. Il secondo è rischioso ed esige attenzione e apprendimento continui: cercare e saper riconoscere chi e cosa, in mezzo all'inferno, non è inferno, e farlo durare, e *dargli spazio*.[2]

As we have seen from the previous chapters, both Borges and Calvino choose the second route: even though reality cannot be wholly represented, both authors still persist in exploring the struggle to which human beings are subjected so as to catch a glimpse of the real. They relentlessly examine what makes the human condition infernal and frustrating. 'Dargli spazio' is what this chapter aims to discuss as it will probe into how both writers spatially represent the inferno of the human condition, caused by the incapacity of representative means to grasp the absolute real.

---

[2] Calvino, *Le città invisibili*, pp. 497-98. My italics.

Geography of Mind: The Authors' Fascinations with the Cities

In defining a writer's attitude towards the world, one needs to recognise the writer's geographical framework of mind, or what Pierpaolo Antonello terms 'paesaggio della mente'.[3] For Antonello, the analysis of this mental landscape means an investigation into how external landscape, be it a specific city or countryside, affects the internal geography of mind and how their interaction influences a literary production. Such an analysis is aimed to enable one to learn more of the writer's mindset in which thoughts and memories are shaped. In Antonello's words, the proper recognition of this mental space helps one gain knowledge of 'le proprie origini, le proprie radici, lo sfondo naturale e antropico dove le forme delle rappresentazioni simboliche, e quindi le forme del pensiero, hanno ricevuto la prima matrice di costituzione, l'*imprinting* figurale e concettuale'.[4] One example that shows how significant this search for a geographical framework of mind is can be found in *Le città invisibili.* In his poetic elaboration before the Khan of fifty-five cities, Marco Polo always finds himself alluding to his birthplace, Venice, in one way or another. In other words, in describing the characteristics of various cities to which he has travelled, Polo always implicitly talks about Venice as it remains the mental backdrop against which he distinguishes other cities:

> [...] Era l'alba quando [Marco Polo] disse: — Sire, ormai ti ho parlato di tutte le città che conosco.
>
> — Ne resta una di cui non parli mai.
>
> Marco Polo chinò il capo.

---

[3] See Pierpaolo Antonello, 'Paesaggi della mente. Su Italo Calvino', *Forum Italicum*, 32 (1998), 108-31. According to Antonello, the use of the Italian word 'paesaggio' (meaning 'landscape' in English) has a close etymological affinity with the words 'paesano' ('villager') and 'paese' ('country'), which lead to the concept of human appropriation of natural geography.

[4] Antonello, 'Paesaggi della mente. Su Italo Calvino', p. 116. His italics.

— Venezia, — disse il Kan.

Marco sorrise. — E di che altro credevi che ti parlassi?

L'imperatore non battè ciglio. — Eppure non ti ho mai sentito fare il suo nome.

E Polo: — Ogni volta che descrivo una città dico qualcosa di Venezia.

— Quando ti chiedo d'altre città, voglio sentirti dire di quelle. E di Venezia, quando ti chiedo di Venezia.

— Per distinguere le qualità delle altre, devo partire da una prima città che resta implicita. Per me è Venezia.[5]

The process of searching for an initial orientation that Borges and Calvino may have undergone can be deduced from their early works and their biographical details. For Borges, Buenos Aires becomes *the* major geographical framework from which his orientation developed. His physical contact with his native city is transformed into the distilled mental experience, as evidenced in his poem 'Buenos Aires':

Antes, yo te buscaba en tus confines
Que lindan con la tarde y la llanura
Y en la verja que guarda una frescura
Antigua de cedrones y jazmines.
En la memoria de Palermo estabas,
En su mitología de un pasado
De baraja y puñal y en el dorado
Bronce de las inútiles aldabas,
Con su mano y sortija. Te sentía
En los patios del Sur y en la creciente
Sombra que desdibuja lentamente

[5] Calvino, *Le città invisibili*, p. 432.

Su larga recta, al declinar el día.

Ahora estás en mí. Eres mi vaga

Suerte, esas cosas que la muerte apaga.[6]

Borges appropriates historical and legendary aspects of Buenos Aires and integrates them into his personal perception of the city; the mental construction of this spatial image becomes, in turn, a *mise-en-scène* where Borges creates his literary oeuvre. *Fervor de Buenos Aires* is the name of Borges's first collection of poems, whose main themes, as the title implies, revolve around his native city. His collections of essays, such as *Inquisiciones*, *El tamaño de mi esperanza*, *El idioma de los argentinos*, and the biography of *Evaristo Carriego*, display his engagement with the Herculean task of reconstructing Buenos Aires.[7] Buenos Aires becomes a backdrop against which critical analysis of Borges's work should be carried out.

While Borges's fascination with Buenos Aires is primarily derived from his childhood memories, Calvino's relationship with external landscape, especially early in his literary career, is mainly based on how it was transformed during the Second World War. The wartime landscape of San Remo, the town where Calvino spent the first twenty years of his life, exerted a strong influence on him.[8] In the 1964 preface to *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno*, he asserts that the use of the Ligurian landscape is of considerable importance: the landscape not only provides a setting for his carefully crafted storyline of a suffering young boy in war-torn Italy, but is also shown to have an interactive relationship with the plot itself:

---

[6] Borges, 'Buenos Aires', in his *Obras completas 1923-1972*, p. 946 (first publ. 1964). My italics.
[7] Cristina Grau, *Borges y la architectura*, 3rd edn (Madrid: Cátedra, 1997), p. 20.
[8] Calvino was not born in San Remo. He was born in Santiago di Las Vegas, a village near Havana, Cuba. He stayed in Cuba less than two years before his family decided to move to San Remo.

> La Resistenza rappresentò la fusione tra paesaggio e persone. Il romanzo che altrimenti mai sarei riuscito a scrivere, è qui. Lo scenario quotidiano di tutta la mia vita era diventato interamente straordinario e romanzesco: una storia sola si sdipanava dai bui archivolti della Città vecchia fin su ai boschi; era l'inseguirsi e il nascondersi d'uomini armati; anche le ville, riuscivo a rappresentare, ora che le avevo viste requisite e trasformate in corpi di guardia e prigioni; anche i campi di garofani, da quando erano diventati terreni allo scoperto, pericolosi ad attraversare, evocanti uno sgranare di raffiche nell'aria.[9]

The influence of war on his hometown can also be clearly perceived in the short stories in the collection *Ultimo viene il corvo*, in which Calvino portrays the hardships and difficulties that the Italians suffered.[10] However, much later in an interview with Maria Corti in 1985, he asserts that his memory of San Remo is rather that of the pre-war idyllic landscape:

> Come ambiente naturale quello che non si può respingere o nascondere è il paesaggio natale e familiare; San Remo continua a saltar fuori nei miei libri, nei più vari scorci e prospettive, soprattutto vista dall'alto, ed è soprattutto presente in molte delle *Città invisibili*. Naturalmente parlo di San Remo qual era fino a trenta o trentacinque anni fa, e soprattutto di com'era cinquanta o sessant'anni fa, quando ero bambino. Ogni indagine non può che partire da quel nucleo da cui si sviluppano l'immaginazione, la psicologia, il linguaggio; questa persistenza è in

---

[9] Calvino, 'Prefazione 1964 al *Sentiero dei nidi di ragno*', in *Romanzi e racconti*, i, 1185-204 (pp. 1188-89).

[10] For more details on the treatment of the setting in *Ultimo viene il corvo*, see Giuseppe Nava, 'La geografia di Calvino', *Paragone*, 38.446 (1987), 21-39 (esp. pp. 25-28). The geography of San Remo and its influence on his early works are also extensively discussed in Claudia Nocentini, *Italo Calvino and the Landscape of Childhood* (Leeds: Northern Universities Press, 2000).

> me forte quanto era stata forte in gioventù la spinta centripeta la quale presto si rivelò senza ritorno, perché rapidamente i luoghi hanno cessato di esistere.[11]

Relating this quotation to Antonello's theory, San Remo becomes Calvino's primal geographical framework in which his psychological and linguistic characteristics were developed. In other words, this hometown becomes a scene where Calvino's initial orientation took shape.[12] However, it should be noted that Calvino went to Turin in 1941 when he decided to study at the Faculty of Agriculture, Turin University. After the war, Turin became the city where he chose to live, while working for the Einaudi publishing house. Calvino acknowledges his fascination with Turin in several interviews and articles. In an interview in 1959, he said:

> Devo molto a Torino. Torino è la città d'Italia in cui si lavora di più, in cui si sprecano meno energie, in cui meno ci si disperde. Ma certo, oggi, non ci si aspetta più che da Torino come Torino venga fuori qualcosa di nuovo. Perché il fervore creativo d'un ambiente è alimentato dai contrasti di forze che vi si muovono e Torino, monarchia d'una sola grande industria, sembra ormai aver assorbito ogni inquietudine e ogni slancio d'iniziativa in un assetto regolato e statico.[13]

---

[11] Calvino, 'Intervista di Maria Corti', in *Saggi 1945-1985*, ii, 2920-29 (p. 2926) (first publ. 1985). In another interview by Carlo Bo, Calvino also asserts the strong bonding he had with San Remo: 'La mia Riviera di Ponente da quindici anni a questa parte non si riconosce più, ma forse appunto per questo il riscoprire, dietro tutto questo cemento, i tratti d'una Liguria della memoria è un'operazione di *pietas* patria ancora più ricca di trepidazione amorosa' (Calvino, 'Colloquio con Carlo Bo', *Saggi 1945-1985*, ii, 2724-32 (p. 2729) (first publ. 1960) His italics).

[12] Calvino stresses the importance of this search for the initial orientation: 'È chiaro che per descrivere la forma del mondo la prima cosa è fissare in quale posizione mi trovo, non dico il posto ma il modo in cui mi trovo orientato, perché il mondo di cui sto parlando ha questo di diverso da altri possibili mondi [...]' (Calvino, 'Dall'opaco', *Romanzi e racconti*, iii, 89-101 (pp. 90-91)).

[13] Calvino, 'Pavese, Carlo Levi, Robbe-Grillet, Butor, Vittorini ...', *Saggi 1945-1985*, ii, 2717-2723 (p. 2719) (first publ. 1959).

One of the main reasons why Calvino expresses his liking for Turin is its urban impersonality, as opposed to provincial familiarity among local people that he probably felt in San Remo. Turin also enabled him to learn more of the world since it is one of the biggest cities in Italy, where there were active intellectual and cultural currents. He always associates Turin with intellectuals; one of the motives that drove him to work in Turin was Cesare Pavese, who introduced Calvino to the literary world by recommending his first novella to the Einaudi publishing house.[14] Unlike Buenos Aires, which enchants Borges mainly because of his childhood experience and romantic nostalgia, Turin captures Calvino's imagination as it is an intellectual space which allows him to meet other authors and gives him a better opportunity to have his works published.

The City as a Site of Complexity

Not only are both Borges and Calvino fascinated with cities, their views of the city are also akin in the sense that they consider their cities to be highly complex, an aspect which is not totally positive. For Borges, the complexity of Buenos Aires can be gauged from one of his interviews, in which he states:

> Buenos Aires is a city already so extravagantly large that nobody knows it. [...] Palermo, for instance, because I found it so changed it hasn't made me want to go back. Although some of the old streets do remain, they are very few. And I went to Adrogué with my mother some two or three years ago, and we found

[14] 'La mia Torino letteraria s'identificò soprattutto con una persona, cui ebbi la fortuna d'esser vicino per alcuni anni e che troppo presto mi mancò: un uomo di cui molto ora si scrive, e spesso in modo che a stento si riesce a riconoscerlo. [...] Parlo di Cesare Pavese. E posso dire che per me, come per altri che lo conobbero e lo frequentarono, l'insegnamento di Torino ha coinciso in larga parte con l'insegnamento di Pavese. La mia vita torinese porta tutta il suo segno; ogni pagina che scrivevo era lui il primo a leggerla; un mestiere fu lui a darmelo immettendomi in quell'attività editoriale per cui Torino è oggi ancora un centro culturale d'importanza più che nazionale; fu lui, infine, che m'insegnò a vedere la sua città, a gustarne le sottili bellezze, passeggiando per i corsi e le colline' (Calvino, 'Forestiero a Torino', *Saggi 1945-1985*, ii, 2705-2707 (p. 2706) (first publ. 1953)).

> everything so changed that we had to come back. All the old places had been sub-divided, the trees had vanished, the old buggies naturally had gone, and the city had been taken over by radios and motor-cycles.[15]

For Borges, Buenos Aires has grown so fast that he cannot get a grip of it. His city becomes too complex and this leads to a sense of uncertainty which can be seen in one of his poems:

> Y la ciudad, ahora, es como un plano
> De mis humillaciones y fracasos;
> Desde esa puerta he visto los ocasos
> Y ante ese mármol he aguardado en vano.
> Aquí el incierto ayer y el hoy distinto
> Me han deparado los comunes casos
> De toda suerte humana [...][16]

Buenos Aires becomes a backdrop where Borges's fortunes and misfortunes are played out. However, the fluctuations that happen to his life in Buenos Aires only heighten his sense of insecurity that he partly attributes to the complexity of the city where he lives. While Borges sometimes feels that living in the city can be disheartening, Calvino considers it to be an inspiration for his literary creation. In one of his interviews, he expressed his indebtedness to the complexity of Turin:

> Torino aveva, a attrarmi, certe virtù non dissimili da quelle della mia gente, e mie favorite: l'assenza di schiume romantiche, il far affidamento soprattutto sul proprio lavoro, una schiva diffidenza nativa, e in più il senso sicuro di

---

[15] Fernández Moreno, 'Weary of Labyrinths: An Interview with Jorge Luis Borges', p. 4.
[16] Borges, 'Buenos Aires', in his *Obras completas 1923-1972*, p. 947 (first publ. 1964). This extract is not from the same poem that was cited in the last section as there are two poems entitled 'Buenos Aires' in his original collection *El otro, el mismo*.

> partecipare al vasto mondo che si muove e non alla chiusa provincia, il piacere di vivere temperato d'ironia, l'intelligenza chiarificatrice e razionale.[17]

For Calvino, in comparison with a closed provincial town, the city is complex and dynamic. Unlike Borges, he views the growth of the city from a more positive perspective, finding it not entirely oppressive. Nevertheless, despite the difference in their attitudes, both authors seem to agree that the image of the city is inherently complex and mesmeric at the same time.

Given its complexity, it would be a mistake to think of this city space as transparent; it is in itself a generative environment, an arena that accommodates as well as influences intellectual conflict and tension. Life in the city is mainly characterised by its unstable foundation, fuelled by the overwhelming size of the city itself and the dynamic acceleration of urban and technological development.[18] This in turn generates feelings of insecurity and alienation on the part of the inhabitants. Georg Simmel also attributes these negative feelings to the complex structure of the metropolis that is stringently imposed on its inhabitants.[19] Unlike rural society, which is determined more on the basis of feelings and emotional relationships, the city community is dependent on a logical and intellectual structure. For Simmel, intellectual relationships cause people to treat one another like numbers, and people are only interested in others insofar as they offer something objectively perceivable. In other words, urban relationships stress the quantitative, rather than qualitative, aspects in basic

---

[17] Calvino, 'Forestiero a Torino', p. 2705.

[18] Edward Timms, 'Introduction: Unreal City — Theme and Variations', in *Unreal City: Urban Experience in Modern European Literature and Art*, pp. 1-12 (p. 3).

[19] 'The relationships and concerns of the typical metropolitan resident are so manifold and complex that, especially as a result of the agglomeration of so many persons with such differentiated interests, their relationships and activities intertwine with one another into a many-membered organism.' Georg Simmel, 'The Metropolis and Mental Life', trans. by Edward A. Shils, in his *On Individuality and Social Forms*, ed. by Donald N. Levine (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1971), pp. 324-339 (p. 328).

interactions. People are distinguished by their different roles in society. According to Simmel, this differential aspect seems to be the one that city-dwellers seek since they aspire to be as different from other people as possible.[20]

There lies a paradox at the heart of Simmel's theory. No matter how desperately city-dwellers seek freedom and independence, the complex network of their roles that is generated by independence and individuality only heightens their awareness of entrapment. Due to the complexity in the network of roles and relationships, the urban mind becomes a more calculating one. Exactness, punctuality, and calculability become the fundamental principles that city-dwellers abide by since the lack of these traits in promises and performances is likely to cause the whole system of relationships to break down into an inextricable chaos. The observation of these principles leads to 'the exclusion of those irrational, instinctive, sovereign human traits and impulses which originally seek to determine the form of life from within instead of receiving it from the outside in a general, schematically precise form'.[21]

Thus, relationships in the city can somehow have a destructive effect on its inhabitants, as their principal values of life and all accompanying natural manifestations are jettisoned. They may then feel imprisoned in this city space and pine for a form of emancipation. One of Calvino's invisible cities clearly illustrates this point. For the inhabitants of 'Ersilia', whenever the network of their relationships, objectified in the form of real strings in various colours, proves too overwhelming, they migrate from the city and rebuild new Ersilia, in

---

[20] For Simmel, one of the deepest problems of urban life stems from the attempt of an individual to maintain his or her independence and individuality against the powers of society. See Simmel, 'The Metropolis and Mental Life', p. 324.

[21] Simmel, 'The Metropolis and Mental Life', pp. 328-329. Simmel uses this illuminating point to justify why certain thinkers, such as Ruskin and Nietzsche, express passionate hatred for the metropolis. According to Simmel, they find the value of life in unschematised individual expressions, which are naturally downplayed in urban space.

which they start to weave similar patterns of strings that they hope will be more regular and more complex. In Calvino's words:

> [gli abitanti] riedificano Ersilia altrove. Tessono con i fili una figura simile che vorrebbero più complicata e insieme più regolare dell'altra. Poi l'abbandonano e trasportano ancora più lontano sé e le case.
> Così viaggiando nel territorio di Ersilia incontri le rovine delle città abbandonate, senza le mura che non durano, senza le ossa dei morti che il vento fa rotolare: ragnatele di rapporti intricati che cercano una forma.[22]

The image of the spider web is intriguing; it implies that human relationships in the city are not only confusing, but their transparency is also misleading as people do not notice them until they are trapped and entangled in them. This entrapment leads to a sense of estrangement since the network of social relationships can eventually be too overwhelming for city residents to make sense out of it. The failure of this rationalisation process can be seen as a failed attempt of man to understand the mechanisms of city space.

Such a failure of comprehension can be related to the incapacity of human beings to represent the city in all its complexity. In Borges's case, it is worthwhile to look at some historical facts at this stage to understand how he perceives the unpresentability of the city. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, Argentina underwent a rapid population growth and there were surges of immigrants from Europe, most of them poverty-stricken and wishing to seek their fortune there. Buenos Aires was subject to a series of dramatic changes: the city expanded considerably and overpopulation became a

---

[22] Calvino, *Le città invisibili*, p. 422.

major problem.[23] The Argentina of the nineteenth century had been a different country, populated mainly by native Indians and creoles. Buenos Aires itself had been a town whose outskirts could be easily designated: it was much smaller and its suburbs were populated by a large criminal community. Borges grew up amidst this atmosphere of change. It is not surprising that his early poems of Buenos Aires show his attempts to understand the growing complexity of the metropolis.

Borges tends to romanticise his exploration by looking back at the past to see how the city was first founded and creating his own imaginary space to counter the real space, which for him is too overwhelming and complex. At the beginning of 'Fundación mítica de Buenos Aires',[24] Borges discusses the myths surrounding the founding of the city with a description of myths that the early settlers wrote about Buenos Aires:

> Lo cierto es que mil hombres y otros mil arribaron
> por un mar que tenía cinco lunas de anchura
> y aun estaba poblado de sirenas y endriagos
> y de piedras imanes que enloquecen la brújula.[25]

The founding fathers of Argentina's capital city created their own myths, most of which challenge contemporary reason: for them the sea was infested with mermaids and sea serpents, their compasses did not work because of magnetic

---

[23] See Beatriz Sarlo, *Una modernidad periférica: Buenos Aires 1920 y 1930* (Buenos Aires: Nueva Visión, 1988).

[24] This poem is included in his third poetical work, *Cuaderno San Martín* (Buenos Aires: Proa, 1929). It was originally entitled, 'Fundación mitológica de Buenos Aires', and later changed into the current title. In the new preface to *Cuaderno San Martín*, republished in 1969, he states: 'Ante la indignación de la crítica, que no perdona que un autor se arrepienta, escribo ahora 'Fundación mítica de Buenos Aires' y no 'Fundación mitológica de Buenos Aires,' ya que la última palabra sugiere macizas divinidades de mármol' (Borges, *Obras completas 1923-1972*, p. 79).

[25] Borges, 'Fundación mítica de Buenos Aires', *Obras completas 1923-1972*, p. 81.

rocks. These mythical tales are no less historically valid than scientific facts, because early settlers might believe in such accounts with the same credulity as contemporary people believe in scientific research.[26] Following this line of argument, Borges creates his own myth of Buenos Aires, claiming that a city block in Palermo can also represent the capital city, a fact not completely unjustifiable since it has all the motifs of Argentine life:

> Un almacén rosado como revés de naipe
> brilló y en la trastienda conversaron un truco;
> el almacén rosado floreció en un compadre,
> ya patrón de la esquina, ya resentido y duro.
>
> El primer organito salvaba el horizonte
> con su achacoso porte, su habanera y su gringo.
> El corralón seguro ya opinaba YRIGOYEN,
> algún piano mandaba tangos de Saborido.[27]

Borges fabricates his exclusive picture of Buenos Aires, with his own recurrent motifs, such as the pink cornershop, an Argentine card game, a ruffian, a barrel organ, contemporary mainstream Argentine politics (epitomised in the figure of

---

[26] The earliest account of the settlers in the River Plate dates back to the year 1516, about 24 years after the arrival of Christopher Columbus in America. Juan Díaz de Solís investigated the River Plate in 1516 and landed on the east bank with a handful of his crew. They were killed by the Querandí tribe. In February 1536 Pedro de Mendoza and his expedition group arrived at the River Plate and established a temporary encampment on the west bank, which he called *Puerto Nuestra Señora Santa María del Buen Aire*, hence the name *Buenos Aires*. However, this settlement did not last. The Spaniards faced the problem of starvation and were also engaged in a war with the Querandí. They needed to slaughter most of their cattle and were eventually driven to cannibalism. It was not until Juan de Garay led an expedition from Asunción down to the River Plate area in 1580 that the settlement was successful. For more details, see David Rock, *Argentina 1516-1987: From Spanish Colonization to Alfonsín*, rev edn (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987; first publ. 1985), esp. pp. 6-14; and José Luis Romero, *Breve historia de la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de la Cultura Económica de Argentina, 1997; first publ. 1965), esp. pp. 23-28.

[27] Borges,.'Fundación mítica de Buenos Aires', p. 81.

an Argentine president, Hipólito Yrigoyen, whose term commenced in 1916),[28] and tango.[29] Borges, realising his inability to depict the complexity of Buenos Aires, reduces it to a city block. In addition to 'Fundación mítica de Buenos Aires', he also attempts to capture the essence of his city in another poem, beginning with the key question of what defines Buenos Aires followed by a list of answers he thinks might be right:

> ¿Qué será Buenos Aires?
>
> Es la Plaza de Mayo a la que volvieron, después de haber guerreado en el continente, hombres cansados y felices.
>
> Es el dédalo creciente de luces que divisamos desde el avión y bajo el cual están la azotea, la vereda, el último patio, las cosas quietas.
>
> Es el paredón de la Recoleta contra el cual murió, ejecutado, uno de mis mayores.[30]

However, as the poem proceeds, Borges realises that perhaps the essence of Buenos Aires that he is trying to grasp may not be in the list of places of historical or emotional significance:

---

[28] Hipólito Yrigoyen (1852-1933) was the leader of the Radical Party of Argentina. His populist policies were strongly opposed to those advanced by established oligarchic parties. In the late 1910s he was much favoured by Argentine intellectuals and left-wing supporters thanks to his decentralist policies. See also Edwin Williamson, 'Argentina: The Long Decline', in his *The Penguin History of Latin America* (London: Penguin, 1992), pp. 459-484 (esp. pp. 460-463). Asked in an interview why he decided to mention the name of Yrigoyen in the poem, Borges answers: '[At the time] I was a Radical [Unión Cívica Radical: a populist party], I was affiliated with the Radical Party. But I was affiliated with it for totally illogical reasons: simply because my maternal grandfather, Isidoro Acevedo, was a close friend of Alem's [Leandro N. Alem (1842-1896): the founder of the Unión Civica Radical party]. So I was a Radical by tradition' (Fernando Sorrentino, *Seven Conversations with Jorge Luis Borges*, trans. by Clark M. Zlotchew (New York: Whitson, 1982), p. 108).

[29] Enrique Saborido (1876-1941) is an Uruguayan musician and composer who settled down in Buenos Aires. Borges mentions Saborido's name is an interview: 'I've been interested in the origins of the tango. I've spoken with Saborido, the composer of 'La morocha' and of 'Felicia' (Sorrentino, *Seven Conversations with Jorge Luis Borges*, p. 9).

[30] Borges, 'Buenos Aires', in his *Obras completas 1923-1972*, pp. 1009-10 (p. 1009) (first publ. 1969).

> No quiero proseguir; estas cosas son demasiado individuales, son demasiado lo que son, para ser también Buenos Aires.
>
> Buenos Aires es la otra calle, la que no pisé nunca, es el centro secreto de las manzanas, los patios últimos, es lo que las fachadas ocultan, es mi enemigo, si lo tengo, es la persona a quien le desagradan mis versos (a mi me desagradan también), es la modesta librería en que acaso entramos y que hemos olvidado, es esa racha de milonga silbada que no reconocemos y que nos toca, es lo que se ha perdido y lo que será, es lo ulterior, lo ajeno, lo lateral, el barrio que no es tuyo ni mío, lo que ignoramos y queremos.[31]

The essence of Buenos Aires, for Borges, lurks in the less well-known areas of the city, the part which the *porteños* tend to take for granted. It is also the Other that haunts Borges and resists any representation since it is what lies hidden and is so simple that people forget. In both 'Fundación mítica de Buenos Aires' and 'Buenos Aires', the city becomes the symbol of complexity *par excellence*, as the perfect, complete rendition of the city is considered to be impossible.

'La lotería en Babilonia',[32] one of his enigmatic short stories, can be read as another manifestation of the failure to represent the city. It portrays how inhabitants set out to rationalise one of the city's mechanisms, the lottery, but its complexity eventually overwhelms them as they cannot make sense of its intricate workings which they have begun themselves. In the story, Borges describes the fate of an inhabitant of Babylon, where the lottery is a major element of reality. The overarching system of the lottery actually begins as a simple game played among laypeople, with copper coins in exchange for rectangles made of bone or parchment, all adorned with symbols. The lotteries in

---

[31] Borges, 'Buenos Aires', p. 1010.
[32] Borges, 'La lotería en Babilonia', in his *Obras completas 1923-1972*, pp. 456-60 (first publ. 1941).

the earliest period were not popular, resulting in the ticket sellers losing their money. Then they introduced some unlucky draws into the system, meaning that the buyers either won some money or were required to pay a fine. The system became more complex: instead of forcing unlucky people to pay a fine (since some of them do not have enough money), they simply print the amount of days of prison on unlucky tickets and send unfortunate people to jail. This lottery system grows in strength and the company assumes all public power and starts dealing with the process of drawing in secret. It is so powerful that in the end the company is thought by Babylonian people to have assumed control over their fate.

This short story reads like a Kafkaesque parable,[33] whose original meaning is by no means unambiguous. However, to a certain degree this short story can be used to illuminate Simmel's theory of the city and mental life. The draws can be considered to be analogous to the relationships that inhabitants have among one another in society. They are considered mainly in mercenary aspects; this corresponds to Simmel's concept of the metropolis whose main life force is its money economy.[34] It is precisely this money economy that fills metropolitan people with the acts of weighing, calculating, and enumerating, causing these people to shift their main focus from qualitative to quantitative values. No wonder Babylonian people are known to be 'muy devoto de la lógica, y aun de la simetría'.[35] Like people in city space, they are engaged in this calculating culture due to the complexity and entanglement of relationships to which they are subjected.

---

[33] Borges also mentions, though obliquely, the name of Kafka in the short story: 'Había ciertos leones de piedra, había una letrina sagrada llamada Qaphqa, había unas grietas en un polvoriento acueducto que, según opinión general, *daban a la Compañía* [...]' (Borges, 'La lotería en Babilonia', p. 458. His italics). For a comparative study of Borges's and Kafka's works, see Gabriela Massuh, ''La lotería en Babilonia': una comparación entre Kafka y Borges', *Boletín de literatura comparada*, 7-8 (1982-1983), 21-37.

[34] Simmel, 'The Metropolis and Mental Life', p. 327.

[35] Borges, 'La lotería en Babilonia', p. 457.

In addition, the transformation of these relationships, which began at first on a simple basis, into complicated networks of cause-and-effect consequences is like a series of shifts that befall any rural community which is changing into a city. The draw, which is at first considered as a trivial game, is subsequently viewed as a formidable system that can control people's lives. This happens when the lottery starts to have an effect on everyone. It is exactly from the moment when the lottery is open to all people that the company that administers the drawing appears mysterious:

> [...] logró que la lotería fuera secreta, gratuita y general. Quedó abolida la venta mercenaria de suertes. Ya iniciado en los misterios de Bel,[36] todo hombre libre automáticamente participaba en los sorteos sagrados, que se efectuaban en los laberintos del dios cada sesenta noches y que determinaban su destino hasta el otro ejercicio.[37]

The company that immediately becomes mysterious once everyone is required to participate in the lottery is similar to the existence of the city itself, which is more than the sum of the networks of relationships among its inhabitants. This existence not only means the limits of its inhabitants' physical bodies or the confines of their physical activities, but also entails 'the totality of meaningful effects which emanates from [the inhabitants] temporally and spatially. The city exists only in the totality of the effects which transcend their immediate sphere'.[38] Thus it follows that city inhabitants do not understand the precise mechanisms of their city, since these fundamental processes surpass their ability

---

[36] Bel or Baal is the semitic for 'Lord': the name of many ancient near-eastern fertility gods. For more details, see Evelyn Fishburn, and Psiche Hughes, *A Dictionary of Borges* (London: Duckworth, 1990), p. 25.
[37] Borges, 'La lotería en Babilonia', pp. 458.
[38] Simmel, 'The Metropolis and Mental Life', p. 335.

to comprehend. In other words, Babylonian people, like metropolitan residents, live in a state of paradox: even though the complexity and exactness of the networks of their relationships in the city shape their intellectual mind and their belief in logic, the mechanisms of the city themselves remain inscrutable. The existence of the company hinges on this space of paradox and this explains why no one, even Babylonian people, can rationalise the corporation. The story ends with various rumours surrounding the history of the company:

> Alguna abominablemente insinúa que hace ya siglos que no existe la Compañía y que el sacro desorden de nuestras vidas es puramente hereditario, tradicional; otra la juzga eterna y enseña que perdurará hasta la última noche, cuando el último dios anonade el mundo. Otra declara que la Compañía es omnipotente, pero que sólo influye en cosas minúsculas: en el grito de un pájaro, en los matices de la herrumbre y del polvo, en los entresueños del alba. Otra, por boca de heresiarcas enmascarados, *que no ha existido nunca y no existirá*. Otra, no menos vil, razona que es indiferente afirmar o negar la realidad de la tenebrosa corporación, porque Babilonia no es otra cosa que un infinito juego de azares.[39]

No one can affirm whether one of these is true and no one can challenge any of them as false either. Their existence just lies beyond understanding. For Borges and Calvino, the city resembles reality in the sense that their complexity is generated by the irreducibility to any complete representation. The city, in this light, becomes a metaphor that both authors use in order to convey the sense of vertiginous multiplicity that defies comprehension.

---

[39] Borges, 'La lotería en Babilonia', p. 460. His italics.

The Poetics of the *Flâneur*: Alienation in the Metropolis

In a way, *Le città invisibili* and 'La lotería en Babilonia' are products of authors who are engaged in critical dialogues about city space. These narratives reflect problems that city residents encounter. Alienation is an important issue implicit in these two texts, which are narrated through the eyes of estranged travellers, who seem to be happily assimilated into the crowd but who in fact stand apart.[40] In *Le città invisibili*, the descriptions of the fifty-five cities are filtered through the figure of Marco Polo, whose real existence is renowned for his wanderlust character, beautifully rendered in prose in his *Il Milione*.[41] In Calvino's narrative, Polo, a young visitor at the Khan's court, is distinguished from other travellers in that he does not describe the cities in the Khan's empire in a matter-of-fact manner:

> Non è detto che Kublai Kan creda a tutto quel che dice Marco Polo quando gli descrive le città visitate nelle sue ambascerie, ma certo l'imperatore dei tartari continua ad ascoltare il giovane veneziano con più curiosità e attenzione che ogni altro suo messo o esploratore. Nella vita degli imperatori c'è un momento, che segue all'orgoglio per l'ampiezza sterminata dei territori che abbiamo conquistato, alla malinconia e al sollievo di sapere che presto rinunceremo a conoscerli e a comprenderli [...].[42]

---

[40] Their personal standpoints from which they view the cities are also significant when it comes to the discussion of this aspect. Borges not only views his native city from the point of view of a local inhabitant, but also views Buenos Aires in comparison with other cities where he stayed, particularly European towns in Spain and Switzerland where his family resided during the First World War. He juxtaposes Buenos Aires with other towns and sees his native city from a traveller's angle, something that a local inhabitant does not normally do. Therefore, his perspective retains its uniqueness and perceptive delicacy that are proper only to a traveller who does not take the city he or she is visiting for granted. For Calvino, since he had lived in San Remo for almost two decades before he went to Turin, his perspective of Turin was, to a degree, unavoidably developed against the *mise-en-scène* of his hometown.

[41] For more details on the connections between Polo's travel writing and the texts of the two authors, see Fernando Aínsa, 'Los sueños de Borges y Calvino revisitados por Marco Polo', *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos*, 553-554 (1996), 105-119.

[42] Calvino, *Le città invisibili*, p. 361.

Polo is portrayed as a gifted troubadour, who not only relates his experiences, but also annexes his feelings and moral messages to his narrative. The more he travels, the more he encounters the multiplicity of the real and the more he challenges any monopolistic view of capturing the real. Owing to this, Polo inserts into his descriptions a sense of melancholy and nostalgia, of not being able to comprehend something completely.

Likewise, the Babylonian narrator in Borges's story is also a wanderer. Even though we know that he was born in Babylon, the accursed city whose populace has its destiny controlled by lottery, he is travelling while narrating the story: 'Poco tiempo me queda; nos avisan que la nave está por zarpar; pero trataré de explicarlo'.[43] In Borges's concise prose, it is very difficult to say exactly where he is and to what destination he is heading; yet one thing that we may gather from the text is that he is, like Polo, not in his homeland:

> Soy de un país vertiginoso donde la lotería es parte principal de la realidad: hasta el día de hoy, he pensado tan poco en ella como en la conducta de los dioses indescifrables o de mi corazón. Ahora, lejos de Babilonia y de sus queridas costumbres, pienso con algún asombro en la lotería y en las conjeturas blasfemas que en el crepúsculo murmuran los hombres velados.[44]

The narrator does not realise that his destiny has long been controlled by the system of lottery until he leaves. Living in his own country undoes his capability to recognise the mechanism of the draw since, while some people voice concern over the existence of this absurd system, the majority of Babylonian people take it for granted and do nothing to abolish it. It is not until the narrator travels and

---

[43] Borges, 'La lotería en Babilonia', p. 459.
[44] Borges, 'La lotería en Babilonia', p. 456.

learns the difference between people from other countries and his compatriots that he gradually realises the preposterous situation that Babylonian people fall into.

Polo and the narrator of Borges's story, therefore, are distinguished from other people of the same group: Polo, from other visitors at the Khan's court, and Borges's narrator, from other Babylonian inhabitants. This difference could be analysed more productively in the light of Walter Benjamin's notion of the *flâneur*. For Benjamin, the figure of the *flâneur* is closely linked to the idea presented by Charles Baudelaire of an artist in city space who opts to study the character of the crowd:

> The crowd is his [the *flâneur*'s] element, as the air is that of birds and water of fishes. His passion and his profession are to become one flesh with the crowd. For the perfect *flâneur*, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite.[45]

Thus, the existence of the *flâneur*, the artist who loiters in urban space, corresponds to the emergence of the city: he[46] is an individual who, through gazing at the crowd, registers the forces which are channelled in the metropolis.[47] According to Benjamin, this wandering figure devotes himself to

---

[45] Charles Baudelaire, 'The Painter of Modern Life', in his *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, ed. and trans. by Jonathan Mayne (New York: Da Capo, 1988), p. 9.

[46] For Benjamin, the *flâneur* figure tends to be male. Susan Buck-Morss argues that 'sexual difference makes visible the privileged position of males within public space. I mean this: the flâneur was simply the name of a man who loitered; but all women who loitered risked being seen as whores, as the term 'street-walker', or 'tramp' applied to women makes clear' (Buck-Morss, 'The Flâneur, the Sandwichman and the Whore: The Politics of Loitering', *New German Critique*, 39 (1986), 99-140 (p. 119)).

[47] Even though Benjamin discusses the *flâneur* in a specific context, i.e. Paris in the nineteenth century, where Baudelaire enjoyed his ambulatory life, idealising the lives of urban inhabitants. Yet, this specific context in a way represents a universal picture of the emergence of the metropolis everywhere. For Keith Tester, the use of the *flâneur* figure in contemporary criticism

the study of the city, which is 'the realisation of that ancient dream of humanity, the labyrinth'.[48] In other words, the home of the *flâneur* is city space itself:

> The street becomes a dwelling for the *flâneur*; he is as much at home among the façades of the houses as a citizen in his four walls. To him the shiny, enamelled signs of businesses are at least as good a wall ornament as an oil painting is to a bourgeois in his salon. The walls are the desk against which he presses his notebooks; news-stands are his libraries and the terraces of cafés are the balconies from which he looks down on his household after his work is done.[49]

The image of the *flâneur* is that of an individual strolling through the labyrinth of the city, attempting to make sense of its architecture, be it banal or complex. For Benjamin, the figure of the *flâneur* employs 'a dialectic optic that perceives the everyday as impenetrable and the impenetrable as the everyday.'[50] An example of *flânerie* can also be found in one of Calvino's imaginary cities, 'Tamara', where everything can be read as a sign:

> Finalmente il viaggio conduce alla città di Tamara. Ci si addentra per vie fitte d'insegne che sporgono dai muri. L'occhio non vede cose ma figure di cose che significano altre cose: la tenaglia indica la casa del cavadenti, il boccale la taverna, le alabarde il corpo di guardia, la stadera l'erbivendola. [...] Lo sguardo

---

sheds light on this fact: '[...] the *flâneur* has been allowed, or made, to take a number of walks away from the streets and arcades of nineteenth-century Paris. Not least, the figure and the activity appear regularly in the attempts of social and cultural commentators to get some grip on the nature and implications of the conditions of modernity and post-modernity' (Keith Tester, 'Introduction', in *The Flâneur*, ed. by Keith Tester (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 1-21 (p. 1)).

[48] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London: Belknap, 1999), p. 429.

[49] Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. by Harry Zohn (London and New York: Verso, 1997), p. 37.

[50] Benjamin, *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. by Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: Verso, 1985), p. 237.

> percorre le vie come pagine scritte: la città dice tutto quello che devi pensare, ti fa ripetere il suo discorso [...].[51]

The *flâneur* acts like an inhabitant of Tamara: he gazes at the streets in the city like written pages, looking for meaning underlying the space. However, the relationship between the *flâneur* and his favourite haunt is very complex: even though the city is transformed into the landscape of the *flâneur* which provides various forms of novelty, amusement and distraction, he resists being incorporated into the crowd. The need to retain individuality results in aloofness and distance in the *flâneur*'s attitude. Here is precisely the point at which Benjamin diverges from Baudelaire: for the latter, the existence of the *flâneur* depends on his assimilation into the crowd, on his becoming 'one flesh with the crowd',[52] whereas for the former, the moment when he incorporates into the crowd, feeling at one with the crowd, his existence as an individual is abolished.[53] This demand for aloofness and originality can be seen especially in Polo and Borges's anonymous narrator of 'La lotería en Babilonia', whose difference from the crowd is one of the mainsprings of their creativity.[54]

Taking his cue from Baudelaire, Benjamin asserts that the *flâneur* observes changing and ephemeral images in urban space, which constitute what Benjamin terms 'phantasmagoria',[55] a phenomenon in which the relationships among

---

[51] Calvino, *Le città invisibili*, pp. 367-68.
[52] Baudelaire, 'The Painter of Modern Life', p. 9.
[53] See also Graeme Gilloch, *Myth & Metropolis: Walter Benjamin and the City* (Oxford: Polity, 1996), p. 153.
[54] There are several studies that aim to analyse the relationships between Borges's early poetry and Benjamin's concept of the *flâneur*. See Sylvia Molloy, '*Flânerie* textuales: Borges, Benjamin y Baudelaire', in her *Las letras de Borges y otros ensayos* (Buenos Aires: Beatriz Viterbo, 1999), pp. 191-207; and Ricardo Forster, 'Borges y Benjamin: la ciudad como escritura y la pasión de la memoria', *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos*, 505-507 (1992), 507-23.
[55] One etymology of the word links 'phantasma', which means 'ghost', with 'agoreuein', which means 'to show in the market place'. See Terry Castle, 'Phantasmagoria: Spectral Technology and the Metaphorics of Modern Reverie', *Critical Inquiry*, 15 (1988), 26-61 (p. 29n). The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'phantasmagoria' as 'a shifting series of real or imaginary figures as seen in a dream' and 'an optical device for rapidly varying the size of images on a screen'.

people lie only on superficial levels, thus causing them to become more fragile than ever. Because of the continuing expansion of the city, its inhabitants suffer a great deal of change in their social bonding with others:

> The city as poetic object resists a stable, singular perspective and demands a discontinuous, fragmented and imagistic literary form which highlights the fleeting, ephemeral character of modern metropolitan existence.[56]

With these fleeting, fragmented and mutating images, the city becomes a site where fiction and reality clash, where dream and desire play an important role in human perception. One of Polo's urban renderings bears witness to this idea. In 'Chloe', where people become strangers to one another, human beings are left so alienated that they feel embarrassed if they talk to each other in the city. The only way they communicate is through eye contact:

> A Chloe, grande città, le persone che passano per le vie non si conoscono. Al vedersi immaginano mille cose uno dell'altro, gli incontri che potrebbero avvenire tra loro, le conversazioni, le sorprese, le carezze, i morsi. Ma nessuno saluta nessuno, gli sguardi s'incrociano per un secondo e poi si sfuggono, cercano altri sguardi, non si fermano.[57]

It should be noted that because Chloe is described as a 'big' city, a metropolis, the estrangement that befalls its inhabitants is all the more unbearable. It is not surprising that imagination and desire, instead of natural spontaneity, come to play an important part in human interaction in the city, where its inhabitants are forbidden to talk to each other if it is not a matter of exigency. This is one of the

---

[56] Christina Britzolakis, 'Phantasmagoria: Walter Benjamin and the Poetics of Urban Modernism', in *Ghosts: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, History*, ed. by Peter Buse and Andrew Stott (Hampshire and London: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 72-91 (p. 73).
[57] Calvino, *Le città invisibili*, p. 398.

characteristics that Simmel uses to distinguish the city from the town, where most relationships are more intimate and depend more on emotion.[58] Given the instinctive urge of human beings to establish bondings and relationships among themselves, Chloe's residents are bound to suffer as their desire for communication cannot find release; thus, they tend to daydream about human contact:

> Così tra chi per caso si trova insieme a ripararsi dalla pioggia sotto il portico, o si accalca sotto un tendone del bazar, o sosta ad ascoltare la banda in piazza, si consumano incontri, seduzioni, amplessi, orge, senza che ci si scambi una parola, senza che ci si sfiori con un dito, quasi senza alzare gli occhi.[59]

With the inclusion of imagination and desire, the city is transformed into a hybrid, spectral locus.

What Benjamin attempts to achieve with his analysis of the *flâneur* is a picture of the city constantly invaded by physical and social changes and accompanying cultural problems. One of the aims of his analysis is to portray a sense of estrangement that happens to people under the regime of capitalism. According to Susan Buck-Morss:

> The city-dweller is constantly distracted by external stimulae never assimilated by consciousness, and comes continuously close to crowds of people never known by name. It leads to the loneliness peculiar to the modern city.[60]

---

[58] Simmel, 'The Metropolis and Mental Life', p. 325.
[59] Calvino, *Le città invisibili*, p. 398.
[60] Susan Buck-Morss, 'The Flâneur, the Sandwichman and the Whore: The Politics of Loitering', p. 128.

This is one of the most important features that the *flâneur* registers with his keen observation. In a sense, Marco Polo and the narrator of 'La lotería en Babilonia' are variations of Benjamin's *flâneur*, who wander city streets and wish to capture the elusive essence of the city. However, they never manage to get a grip on it since the city always changes, hence their estrangement and solitude. Acute sensibility and vivid imagination also increase these feelings. It can be argued that *flânerie* is not only a product of city space, but also a telling index of city estrangement.[61]

However, while Borges's *flâneur* suffers from his estrangement since he looks back at his country with nostalgia and depression, Calvino's Marco Polo seems to enjoy his travelling. Alienation seems to have positive effect upon him since it enables him to view the Great Khan's empire in a distinctive way. *Marcovaldo*,[62] a collection of Calvino's short stories about life in an industrial city, also conveys the author's sense of optimism. This collection portrays the life of Marcovaldo, the rural protagonist, who comes in search of fortune in the city, roaming the city streets like Jean-Jacques Rousseau's noble savage and longing to capture nature in the city. However, his search is doomed because the city is sharply contrasted with nature, as Calvino writes in the preface to the collection:

> In mezzo alla città di cemento e asfalto, Marcovaldo va in cerca della Natura. Ma esiste ancora, la Natura? Quella che egli trova è una Natura dispettosa, contraffatta, compromessa con la vita artificiale.[63]

---

[61] For Rob Shields, the *flâneur* is the embodiment of alienation and this is triply intensified since the wandering *flâneur* is estranged 'within himself, between himself and his world, and between himself and other people' (Rob Shields, 'Fancy Footwork: Walter Benjamin's Notes on *Flânerie*', in *The Flâneur*, pp. 61-80 (p. 77)).

[62] Calvino, *Marcovaldo ovvero Le stagioni in città*, in his *Romanzi e racconti*, i, 1065-82 (first publ. 1963).

[63] Calvino, 'Presentazione 1966 all'edizione scolastica di *Marcovaldo*', in *Romanzi e racconti*, i, 1233-39 (p. 1233).

Like Polo and Borges's narrator of 'La lotería en Babilonia', Marcovaldo also feels alienated in the big city. Since he is originally from the countryside and has not completely adapted to the ways of life in the metropolis, Marcovaldo is often portrayed as a misfit who struggles to survive in urban space, where a great deal of what happens eludes his comprehension. His alienation is heightened by his innocent wish to find nature in the artificiality of urban life, symbolising both his nostalgic desire to return to where he comes from, and his longing to escape from the infernal city, which becomes more like a prison.[64] However, as with Polo, his persistent search for nature in the city can be interpreted as a sense of hopeful optimism. Marcovaldo hopes that one day he will be able to find nature in the city and adjust himself fully to the city lifestyle. This sense of optimism in face of the city's negative aspects can be seen in 'Funghi in città', which begins with the description of the city as a desert, which, however discouraging, does not stop the protagonist from his search for nature:

> Aveva questo Marcovaldo un occhio poco adatto alla vita di città: cartelli, semafori, vetrine, insegne luminose, manifesti, per studiati che fossero a colpire l'attenzione, mai fermavano il suo sguardo che pareva scorrere sulle sabbie del deserto.[65]

When Marcovaldo, to his surprise, sees some mushrooms growing near the tree lawn near his bus stop, his view of the city is brightened up:

---

[64] 'Da dove egli sia venuto alla città, quale sia l'*altrove* di cui egli sente nostalgia, non è detto; potremmo definirlo un *immigrato*, anche se questa parola non compare mai nel testo; ma la definizione è forse impropria, perché tutti in questi novelle sembrano *immigrati* in un mondo estraneo dal quale non si può sfuggire' (Calvino, 'Presentazione 1966 all'edizione scolastica di *Marcovaldo*', p. 1233. His italics). JoAnn Cannon also shares a similar idea, arguing that 'Marcovaldo is truly an exile: this Rousseauean hero wanders the city streets, oblivious to the cement and asphalt which surround him. But the few signs of nature which are still evident in the city never escape his notice' (Cannon, 'The Image of the City in the Novels of Italo Calvino', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 24 (1978), 83-90 (p. 84)).

[65] Calvino, *Marcovaldo*, p. 1067.

> [...] erano funghi, veri funghi, che stavano spuntando proprio nel cuore della città! A Marcovaldo parve che il mondo grigio e misero che lo circondava diventasse tutt'a un tratto generoso di ricchezze nascoste, e che dalla vita ci si potesse ancora aspettare qualcosa [...][66]

He plans to go mushroom picking with his family the next Sunday. When they finish their harvest, Marcovaldo also gives some mushrooms to people waiting at the bus stop as a gesture of good will. However, after they have mushrooms for dinner, Marcovaldo and his family are rushed to hospital as it turns out that the mushrooms are poisonous. Mushrooms, which once were part of nature, become toxic in the city. For JoAnn Cannon, this testifies to the belief that 'the city and nature cannot coexist'[67] since natural elements cannot tolerate the arficiality of the city. However, no matter how alienating and artificial that life in the city can be, Marcovaldo's hope never vanishes:

> [...] Marcovaldo, attraverso tutti gli scacchi, non è mai un pessimista; è sempre pronto a riscoprire in mezzo al mondo che gli è ostile lo spiraglio d'un mondo fatto a sua misura, non si arrende mai, è sempre pronto a ricominciare.[68]

Like Polo and the narrator of Borges's tale of Babylon, Marcovaldo also suffers from alienation. However, unlike the pessimistic mode that pervades Borges's 'La lotería en Babilonia', the protagonist of Calvino's *Marcovaldo* remains optimistic and hopes that one day he will be successful in his pursuit of nature.

Polo, Marcovaldo, and Borges's anonymous narrator are variations of the *flâneur* who wander city streets, feeling both alienated and lonely. Despite the difference

---

[66] Calvino, *Marcovaldo*, pp. 1067-68.
[67] Cannon, 'The Image of the City in the Novels of Italo Calvino', p. 85.
[68] Calvino, 'Presentazione 1966 all'edizione scolastica di *Marcovaldo*', p. 1236.

in their attitudes, these protagonists remain, to a certain degree, passive in face of the generative environment of the city, which for them becomes overwhelming. The city for this ambulatory figure is no longer a normal site which is comprehended by means of logic and reason; its complexity has heightened the sense of inscrutability and transformed the city into a monstrous site, a labyrinth.

From the City to the Labyrinth (I): When Complexity Turns into Monstrosity

Raymond Williams analyses alienation in nineteenth-century literature and finds several themes that deserve attention. The first two themes deal with negative images of the mass in the city: 'a crowd of strangers' and 'an individual lonely and isolated within the crowds'.[69] These two images are the products of city transformation, which render human relationships incomplete and inhumane. The third motif is derived from the first two images: the strangeness and impersonal crowding naturally lead to the powerful image of the 'impenetrability' of the city.[70] The three motifs that Williams discusses are reactions caused by the inscrutable aspect of the city, i.e. the incapacity of city-dwellers to find a complete representation of their city. This leads to the indifferent, cold image of the city seen through the eyes of the *flâneur* that Benjamin discusses:

---

[69] Williams, 'The Metropolis and the Emergence of Modernism', in *Unreal City: Urban Experience in Modern Literature and Art*, ed. by Edward Timms and David Kelley (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), pp. 15-16.

[70] Williams, 'The Metropolis and the Emergence of Modernism', p. 17. However, the transformation of the city does not bring with it only negative aspects: Williams discusses the last two themes of alienation, which connote positive values. The city can be seen as 'the site of new kinds of human solidarity' (p. 18), in which the organisation of people of the same kind is made much easily, given the development in communication technology and means. The city also provides a sense of 'liberating diversity and mobility' (p. 19): for Williams, social climbing is much easier in urban space since it is an active centre of learning and opportunities.

> The masses in Baudelaire. They stretch before the flâneur as a veil: they are the newest drug for the solitary. — Second, they efface all traces of the individual: they are the newest asylum for the reprobate and the proscript. — Finally, within the labyrinth of the city, the masses are the newest and most inscrutable labyrinth. Through them, previously unknown chthonic traits are imprinted on the image of the city.[71]

For Benjamin, this impersonal aspect of the city that accompanies its inscrutable inhabitants is symbolised by the motif of an impenetrable labyrinth.

The image of the labyrinth is appropriate since it emerges from the myth of the Minotaur and Theseus, which involves a series of seductions and entrapments. In Greek mythology, Daedalus was commissioned by King Minos to build a labyrinth to hide the Minotaur, a son of his own wife and a bull. After defeating the Athenians, King Minos required them to send people to the labyrinth to feed the Minotaur. One year, Theseus, a son of King Aegeus, was one of the unfortunate people to be sacrificed to the Minotaur. Once he arrived in Crete, he fell in love with Ariadne, Minos's daughter. With the aid of Daedalus, Ariadne was able to save Theseus's life by asking him, upon entering the maze, to keep hold of a thread, the other end of which she would be holding outside. When Theseus killed the Minotaur, he was able to trace his way back, by following the thread, to the entrance and meet his lover.[72]

In retrospect, the myth of the Minotaur is tragic: the half-bull half-man creature was kept away from its own begetters since it was born, locked up in a man-made labyrinth specially designed so that it could not escape. Then, after years of

---

[71] Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, p. 446.

[72] For more details, see Helmut Jaskolski, *The Labyrinth: Symbol of Fear, Rebirth, and Liberation*, trans. by Michael H. Kohn (Boston and London: Shambhala, 1997), esp. pp. 16-42; Philip West, 'The Redundant Labyrinth', *Salmagundi*, 46 (1979), 58-83.

loneliness, it was killed at the hands of a man who obtained help from his own half-sister. Borges, touched by the lack of morality in this myth, renders it into a short story, 'La casa de Asterión',[73] in which he attempts to describe this mythic narrative through the eyes of the Minotaur. Borges's labyrinth is characterised by its openness: the Minotaur can go out and come in whenever it wishes.[74] However, it prefers to stay inside the labyrinth because people are usually scared by its appearance whenever it ventures to go out. According to the Minotaur's own words, upon seeing it, 'la gente oraba, huía, se prosternaba; unos se encaramaban al estilóbato del templo de las Hachas, otros juntaban piedas'.[75] The Minotaur suffers so much from social estrangement that it decides to stay inside the labyrinth. This solitude makes its entrapment more pathetic. This labyrinth in which it resides reflects its own mental state; it intensifies the fact that the Minotaur is trapped and secluded from other people. In other words, the labyrinth symbolises the Minotaur's solitude.[76] In a way, the Minotaur resembles the alienated *flâneur* since both of them are locked up in a site of which they cannot make sense. Its labyrinth and the city are also similar in that they are open and vast, but this vastness only generates a feeling of entrapment. Furthermore, the solitude of the Minotaur is also the solitude of the city-dweller, who is similarly imprisoned in the open metropolis. The ending of the story is also

---

[73] Borges, 'La casa de Asterión', in his *Obras completas 1923-1972*, pp. 569-70 (first publ. 1949). Asterius is another name, a lesser known one, of the Minotaur. It means the 'star being'; therefore, the Minotaur is usually represented by Greek vase painters as having a body speckled with stars. See Jaskolski, *The Labyrinth*, p. 16. Borges chooses to use this lesser known name of the Minotaur for stylistic reasons. He probably wants the reader to keep guessing who the protagonist is until the end of the story, when the name 'el minotauro' appears literally in the last line. For more details on the stylistic discussion, see Rodríguez Monegal, 'Symbols in Borges' Work', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 19 (1973), 325-40 (pp. 334-35).

[74] According to his epilogue to *El Aleph*, Borges's design of the labyrinth is inspired by George Federic Watts's *The Minotaur* (figure 2). See Borges, 'Epílogo', in his *Obras completas 1923-1972*, pp. 629-30.

[75] Borges, 'La casa de Asterión', p. 569. For the detailed analysis of the story, see also Enrique Anderson Imbert, 'Un cuento de Borges 'La casa de Asterión'', in *Jorge Luis Borges*, ed. by Jaime Alazraki (Madrid: Taurus, 1976), pp. 135-43 (first publ. 1960).

[76] According to Oscar Caiero, the labyrinth in 'La casa de Asterión' bears a striking resemblance to Franz Kafka's *The Castle*, in which the labyrinthine castle reflects the world in which the protagonist lives in. For more details, see Oscar Caiero, 'Borges, por la huella de Kafka', *Criterio*, 11 August 1977, 416-21 (p. 420).

Figure 2 *The Minotaur* by George Federic Watts.

revealing in the sense that the Minotaur seems to be willing to die when Theseus comes to kill it; solitude and alienation appear to oppress the Minotaur so much that death becomes the only possible escape:

> sé que uno de ellos profetizó, en la hora de su muerte, que alguna vez llegaría mi redentor. Desde entonces no me duele la soledad, porque sé que vive mi redentor y al fin se levantará sobre el polvo.[77]

The irony is intensified when Theseus, after killing the Minotaur, comes out of the labyrinth to meet Ariadne, claiming that:

> — ¿Lo creerás, Ariadna? — dijo Teseo —. El minotauro apenas se defendió.[78]

The Minotaur hardly defends itself because perhaps it considers that death will put an end to all its miseries in the monstrous labyrinth. The negative state of this labyrinth is not dissimilar to that of the city, in which inhabitants find alienation too unbearable.

In addition to 'La casa de Asterión', Borges also plays on the theme of the labyrinth in 'Los dos reyes y los dos laberintos',[79] in which the King of Babilonia holds the King of the Arabs captive and imprisons him in a labyrinthine jail. The King of the Arabs implores Allah's aid and manages to find a way out, promising himself that one day he will likewise incarcerate the King of Babilonia in a maze. When an opportunity for revenge knocks, he does not hesitate to seize it: he wreaks havoc upon the kingdoms of Babilonia and succeeds in capturing the King of Babilonia. The King of the Arabs then mercilessly abandons him in a

---

[77] Borges, 'La casa de Asterión', p. 570.
[78] Borges, 'La casa de Asterión', p. 570.
[79] Borges, 'Los dos reyes y los dos laberintos', in his *Obras completas 1923-1972*, p. 607 (first publ. 1949).

desert, where he subsequently dies of hunger and thirst. The desert becomes a variation of the labyrinth, since in this case the King of Babilonia cannot find an exit.

What these two short stories display is the ideology that lies behind the image of the labyrinth. For Borges, the labyrinth, like the city, becomes a symbol of prison that encloses and disorients a human being; it is transformed into a formidable spatial inclosure whose primary aim is to seduce and lead its victims astray.[80] Calvino also employs the motif of the labyrinth in the same way. Several cities that he conjures up in *Le città invisibili* bear similar labyrinthine traces. 'Ottavia' is vividly described as a 'città-ragnatela',[81] suspended on a net of ropes, chains, and catwalks over the void. The intersections of these paths intensify the labyrinthine effect of the city itself; however, since the city itself is suspended between two steep mountains, its dwellers need to take care not to set their foot in holes. This suspension marks the fragility of the city's foundation, which in turn affects the mentality of its dwellers. 'Cecilia' is another city that traps and confuses its dwellers. Calvino describes this city through dialogues between a wanderer and a goatherd, who respectively pride themselves on their ability to recognise the characteristics of rural and city spaces. Nevertheless, when they travel to Cecilia, both of them are disoriented and lose themselves in this

---

[80] For more details of Borges's treatments of the labyrinth motif, see L. A. Murillo, 'The Labyrinths of Jorge Luis Borges: An Introduction to the Stories of *The Aleph*', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 20 (1959), 259-66; Frank Dauster, 'Notes on Borges' Labyrinth', *Hispanic Review*, 30 (1962), 142-48; Neil D. Isaac, 'The Labyrinth of Art in Four *Ficciones* of Jorge Luis Borges', *Studies in Short Fiction*, 6 (1969), 383-94; Nicolás Rosa, 'Borges o la ficción laberíntica', in *Nueva novela latinoamericana*, ed. by Jorge Lafforgue, 2 vols (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 1974), ii, 140-73; Antonio Planells, 'El centro de los laberintos de Borges', *Revista Interamericana de Bibliografía*, 42 (1992), 102-20; Kate Fullbrook, 'The Godfather: Borges and the Ethics of the Labyrinth', in *Just Postmodernism*, ed. by Steven Earnshaw (Amsterdam: Atlanta, 1997), pp. 181-96.

[81] Calvino, *Le città invisibili*, p. 421. 'Ottavia' is not the only city in *Le città invisibili* which carries a strong labyrinthine motif, another city, 'Armilla', also has a labyrinthine foundation. The only remaining construction of the city is its hydraulic systems, which spread through the city in an intricate network. The narrator believes that this city is built to allure nymphs and naiads, who like to travel in water-pipes. Again the theme of seduction is strongly felt in the narrative. See Calvino, *Le città invisibili*, pp. 396-97.

beguiling city. They meet each other again after a few years and the wanderer asks the goatherd where they are. With frustration, the goatherd replies:

> — A Cecilia, così non fosse! — mi rispose. — Da tanto camminiamo per le sue vie, io e le capre, e non s'arriva a uscirne... [...]
>
> — Non può essere! — gridai. — Anch'io, non so da quando, sono entrato in una città e da allora ho continuato ad addentrarmi per le sue vie. Ma come ho fatto ad arrivare dove tu dici, se mi trovavo in un'altra città, lontanissima da Cecilia, e non ne sono ancora uscito?
>
> — I luoghi si sono mescolati, — disse il capraio, — Cecilia è dappertutto; qui una volta doveva esserci il Prato della Salvia Bassa. Le mie capre riconoscono le erbe dello spartitraffico.[82]

Feeling baffled and annoyed, both the wanderer and the goatherd cannot find their way out of the labyrinthine city, which, according to them, seems to multiply indefinitely.

From the City to the Labyrinth (II): Piranesi's Nightmarish Prison

For Borges and Calvino, the similarity between the city and the labyrinth is appropriate, especially since both of the motifs signal seduction and entrapment. People are lured to the city by amenities that can satisfy their needs; yet, once they become city-dwellers, they are imprisoned and alienated by the complexity of the city, not unlike the Minotaur in the labyrinth seeking to escape from its plight. While the concept of the labyrinth as elaborated by both authors is analysed as an extended metaphor for the city which both seduces and alienates its inhabitants in the previous section, the confusing, interminably multiplying

---

[82] Calvino, *Le città invisibili*, p. 488.

geography of the labyrinth will be the focal point in this section, as it will be discussed alongside Giovanni Battista Piranesi's etchings, which capture the essence of the complexity and corruption of the labyrinth and, by extension, the city.

The affinity between Borges and Piranesi can be clearly seen in one of Borges's short stories, 'El inmortal',[83] in which he attempts to chart the life of a man who seeks after a river, which he believes contains mysterious water that can prolong his life indefinitely. The man, named Joseph Cartaphilus,[84] is informed of the secret river whilst at war in Thebes. After various consultations, he gathers that the river is situated in a desert and on one of its shores lies the City of the Immortals. He immediately sets off on his journey with hundreds of soldiers and mercenaries. However, after desertions and attempts at sedition, he finds himself on his own, stranded in the desert and suffering unbearable thirst. One dawn, before he collapses, he catches a glimpse of a town full of pyramids and towers. Then, after he regains consciousness, he finds that his hands are tied behind his back and in front of him lies a noiseless, impure stream. Without hesitating, he throws himself down the slope and plunges his face into the dark water and laps at it like an animal. Behind this stream lies the City of the Immortals. He does not recognise how many days or nights have passed before he is able to survive his pain. The Troglodytes, who live nearby, do nothing to help him; they only look at him with indifferent eyes. He then sets off to explore the City of the Immortals by entering a cavern in the stone plateau, on which the city is constructed. The path in the cavern leads him to a vast circular chamber with nine doors. Only one of them leads to another gallery identical to the first. He

---

[83] Borges, 'El inmortal', in his *Obras completas 1923-1972*, pp. 533-44 (first publ. 1949).
[84] According to Dominique Jullien, Joseph Cartaphilus is the original name of the Wandering Jew, who is condemned to walk until the end of time for having insulted Jesus Christ. For more details on the affinity the immortal man has with the legendary Wandering Jew, see Dominique Jullien, 'Biography of an Immortal', *Comparative Literature*, 47 (1995), 136-59.

goes astray in the subterranean labyrinth for a considerable period of time before he sees a shaft of light. He raises his eyes and above him he sees a circle of blue sky; with rapture, he sees a stairway that leads up the wall and starts climbing up, ascending from the subterranean realm of labyrinthine circular galleries and confusing paths into the brilliant city that he once saw from afar. However, after he has explored and scrutinised the city for a while, his fascination with the city begins to give way to horror. The impression of endlessness and the sensation of complex irrationality overwhelm him.

A sense of vertigo is strongly felt by Cartaphilus. The overuse of geometrical designs transforms the city into a nightmarish plane which confuses the traveller and the inhabitant alike. The affinity between the City of the Immortals and the labyrinth is beyond question as Borges links the image of the city to that of the labyrinth since both spatial motifs ensnare and terrorise people: 'Yo había cruzado un laberinto, pero la nítida Ciudad de los Inmortales me atemorizó y repugnó'.[85] In describing this labyrinthine, hellish city, Borges probably derives his ideas from Piranesi's etchings, especially those of *Cercari d'invenzione*.[86]

---

[85] Borges, 'El inmortal', p. 537. Borges also refers to the City of the Immortals as labyrinth several times throughout the course of the narrative. For instance, he describes the city as having 'nueve puertas en aquel sótano: ocho daban a un laberinto que falazmente desembocaba en la misma cámara [...]' (p. 536). Upon leaving the city, he states: '[ú]nicamente sé que no me abandonaba el temor de que, al salir del último laberinto, me rodeara otra vez la nefanda Ciudad de los Inmortales' (p. 538).

[86] It was originally published as *Invenzioni Capric. Di Carceri all'acquaforte datte in luce da Giovani Buzard in Roma Mercante al Corso* (Rome: Bouchard, c. 1749/50). According to Ronald Christ, the means by which Borges knew Piranesi was probably Thomas De Quincey's influential book, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*. In a passage in this book De Quincey describes the vertiginous, dream-like effect gained from looking at Piranesi's etchings: 'Many years ago, when I was looking over Piranesi's 'Antiquities of Rome', Coleridge, then standing by, described to me a set of plates from that artist, called his 'Dreams', and which record the scenery of his own visions during the delirium of a fever. Some of these (I describe only from memory of Coleridge's account) represented vast Gothic halls; on the floor of which stood mighty engines and machinery, wheels, cables, catapults, &c., expressive of enormous power put forth, or resistance overcome. Creeping along the sides of the walls, you perceived a staircase; and upon this, groping his way upwards, was Piranesi himself. Follow the stairs a little farther, and you perceive them reaching an abrupt termination, without any balustrade, and allowing no step onwards to him who should reach the extremity, except into the depths below. Whatever is to become of poor Piranesi, at least you suppose that his labours must now in some way terminate. But raise your eyes, and behold a second flight of stairs still higher, on which again Piranesi is perceived, by this time

Borges mentioned Piranesi's etchings in 1943 in 'Sobre el *Vathek* de William Beckford', considering it as one of the works which influenced Beckford's gothic work.[87] 'El inmortal' is included in Borges's collection *El Aleph*, which was first published in 1949, about six years after he wrote the essay on Beckford; therefore, it is not too far-fetched to infer that 'El inmortal' was written around the time when Borges was mesmerised by Piranesi's infernal etchings, which reflect Piranesi's own ideas of how a prison should be conceived. In these etchings, geometrical designs are used only to enhance the infernal, dream-like quality of the prison itself: the heavy use of bridges, archways, wooden rafters, iron jacks and chains serve not only to portray the prisoner's hard life inside, but also to confuse the viewer, generating in him or her giddy and vertiginous feelings (see figures 3, 4, and 5). According to Marguerite Yourcenar, it is a paradox that this overuse of geometrical images can result in confusion on the part of viewer:

> The irrational world of the *Prisons* dizzies us not from its lack of measurements (for never was Piranesi more of a geometrician) but from the very multiplicity of calculations which we know to be exact and which bear on proportions which we know to be false.[88]

---

standing on the very brink of the abyss. Once again elevate your eye, and a still more aerial flight of stairs is descried; and there, again, is the delirious Piranesi, busy on his aspiring labours: and so on, until the unfinished stairs and the hopeless Piranesi both are lost in the upper gloom of the hall. With the same power of endless growth and self-reproduction did my architecture proceed in dreams' (De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (London: Walter Scott, 1886), p. 92). For the discussion on the influence of De Quincey's text on 'El inmortal', see Ronald Christ, *The Narrow Act: Borges's Art of Allusion* (New York: New York University Press, 1969), pp. 200-10.

[87] 'Yo complementaría esa lista con las *Carceri d'invenzione*, de Piranesi; aguafuertes alabadas por Beckford, que representan poderosos palacios, que son también laberintos inextricables.' Borges, 'Sobre el *Vathek* de William Beckford', in his *Otras inquisiciones*, pp. 187-192 (p. 191).

[88] Marguerite Yourcenar, 'The Dark Brain of Piranesi', in her *The Dark Brain of Piranesi and Other Essays*, trans. by Richard Howard and Marguerite Yourcenar (Henley-on-Thames: Aidan Ellis, 1985), pp. 88-128 (p. 113).

Figure 3 *Carceri d'Invenzioni di G. Battista Piranesi* (2nd State).

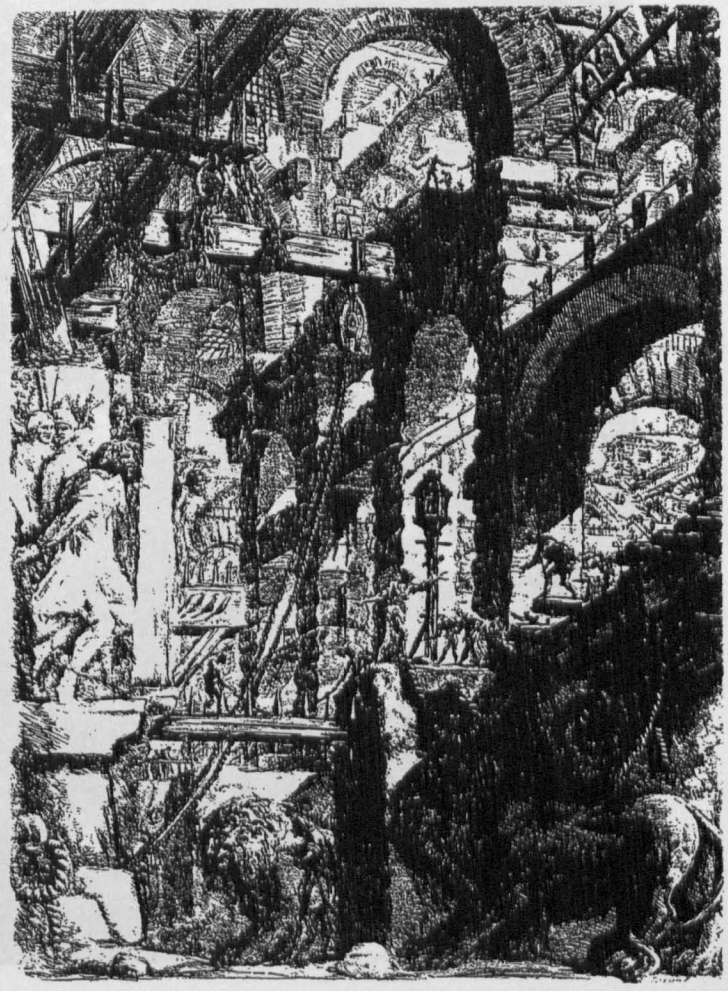

Figure 4 Carcere V. *The Lion Bas-Reliefs.*

Figure 5 Carcere VII. *The Drawbridge* (2nd State).

For Yourcenar, it is the overuse of geometrical images that triggers in the viewer a sense of vertigo; this comes from the artist's desire to be precise, to imitate the multiplicity of the real, filtering it through geometry, that makes the viewer giddy.[89]

The architecture of the City of the Immortals in Borges's short story also conveys this similar sense of vertigo. Borges describes the city as 'un laberinto [que] es una casa labrada para confundir a los hombres; su arquitectura, pródiga en simetrí as, está subordinada a ese fin'.[90] The wanderer in Borges's story and the viewer of Piranesi's imaginary prison etchings feel the same sense of the futility of human fate. The images conjured up by both artists make the viewer question his or her own purpose in life and at the same time they convey a sense of futility if human beings wish to fight against time and nature. This futility can also be seen on the level of textual and visual descriptions. Some of the architectures of the Immortal City apparently serve no purpose:

> Abundaban el corredor sin salida, la alta ventana inalcanzable, la aparatosa puerta que daba a una celda o a un pozo, las increíbles escaleras inversas, con los peldaños y la balaustrada hacia abajo. Otras, adheridas aéreamente al costado de un muro monumental, morían sin llegar a ninguna parte, al cabo de dos o tres giros, en la tiniebla superior de las cúpulas.[91]

Piranesi's depiction of the horrid prison (see especially figure 3) shows stairways and bridges that lead nowhere. These architectural images are made by human beings and they are depicted as corrupt and uninhabitable, eroded by the tides of

---

[89] For more details, see also Manfredo Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth: Avant-Gardes and Architecture from Piranesi to the 1970s*, trans. by Pellegrino d'Acierno and Robert Conolly (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London: MIT Press, 1987), esp. pp. 25-54.
[90] Borges, 'El inmortal', p. 537.
[91] Borges, 'El inmortal', pp. 537-38.

time. The details of this city will be accumulated in accordance with the indefinite period of the real that the wanderer lives to the extent that they become too multiplied for the city to develop properly.[92] This sense of overwhelming details can also be seen in one of Piranesi's etchings (figure 6), in which he piles up cultural monuments and statues, created throughout the course of human history. In addition to feelings of awe and respect, these cultural exhibits also breed in the viewer a sense of giddiness and confusion.

Borges and Piranesi describe the nightmarish state of the multiplicity of the real and the pathetic state into which human beings are reduced if they wish to attain immortal status. The desire to reach immortal status will only result in catastrophe, not dissimilar to that of Funes's ambitious project to create a new language. The city and the labyrinth, in this light, become spatial renditions of the desire to capture the real in its original plethora. Yet, if Funes's death through pulmonary congestion is a metaphor for the limits of the human condition, the attempts of Borges and Piranesi to represent complete reality similarly turn out to be a nightmare, since the multiplicity of reality only generates in readers and viewers a sense of giddiness and vertigo. Calvino suggests a solution to this oneiric chaos: in 'Leonia', one of Calvino's imaginary cities, its inhabitants would have faced the danger of living in an unlivable city had they not learned to discard their rubbish. They learn to throw away old and used things so as to make room for new things to come; in a sense the true passion of its residents is two-fold:

---

[92] For Ernest H. Redekop, this sense of multiplicity is closely linked with interminability and irrationality: 'Aside from the horror instilled by the instruments of torture [in Piranesi's etchings], the viewer feels immensely threatened by the suggestions of interminability, by the unreason in purpose and scale. These are fit prisons for the Immortals; they are towers of Babel, monuments to the hubris and disorder in the mind of man, versions of the House of Asterion, the labyrinth which is the world' (Ernest H. Redekop, 'Labyrinths in Time and Space', *Mosaic*, 13 (1980), 95-113 (pp. 100-1)).

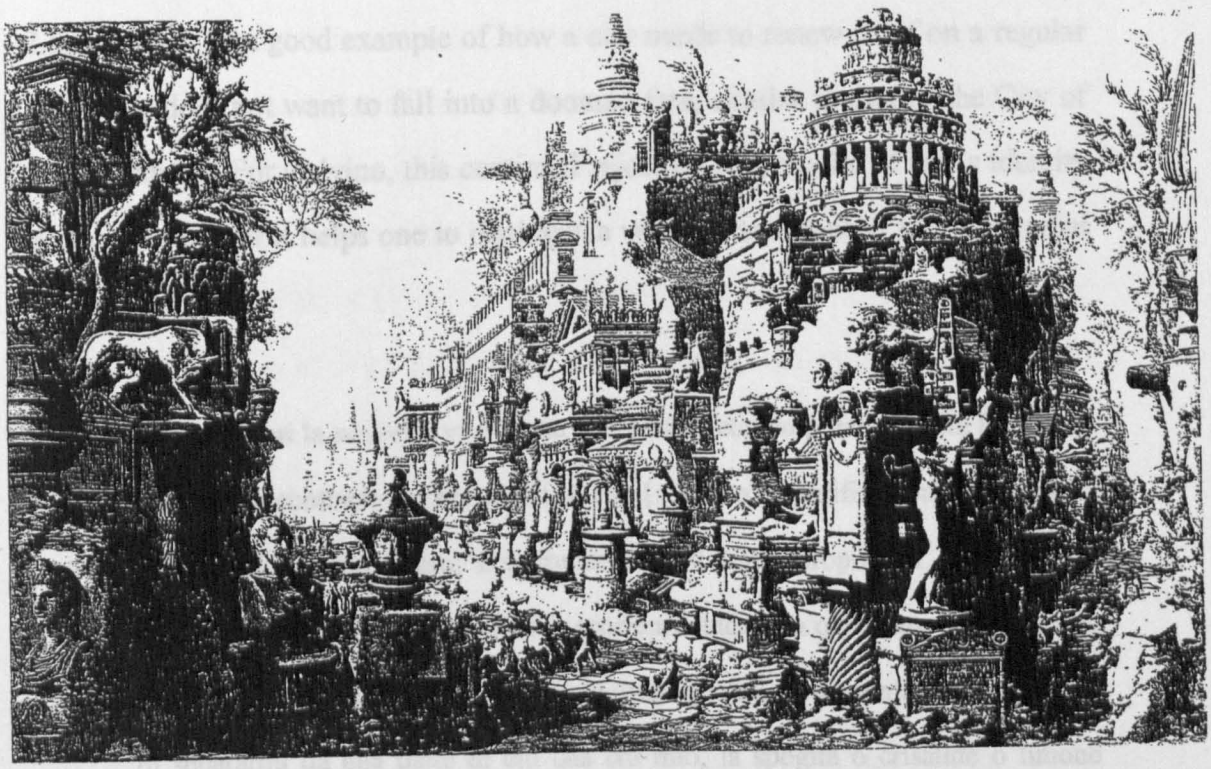

***Figure 6** Ancient Intersection of the Via Appia and Via Ardentina.*

> Tanto che ci si chiede se la vera passione di Leonia sia davvero come dicono il godere delle cose nuove e diverse, o non piuttosto l'espellere, l'allontanare da sé, il mondarsi d'una ricorrente impurità.[93]

Leonia gives us a good example of how a city needs to renew itself on a regular basis if it does not want to fall into a doomed fate, similar to that of the City of the Immortals. For Calvino, this continual rejection is symbolic of one's identity formation, in that it helps one to distinguish what is important to self from what is not:

> Il portar fuori la *poubelle* va dunque interpretato contemporaneamente [...] sotto l'aspetto di contratto e sotto quello di rito [...], rito di purificazione, abbandono delle scorie di me stesso, non importa se si tratta proprio di quelle scorie contenute nella *poubelle* o se quelle scorie rimandano a ogni altra possibile mia scoria, l'importante è che in questo mio gesto quotidiano io confermi la necessità di separarmi da una parte di ciò che era mio, la spoglia o crisalide o limone spremuto del vivere, perché ne resti la sostanza, perché domani io possa identificarmi per completo (senza residui) in ciò che sono e ho.[94]

The act of rejection is thus indispensable, helping one to recognise what constitutes one's own identity at present. For Borges, this is similar to the act of forgetting or death if the immortal wanderer wishes to cure himself of the vertiginous feelings of eternal return, that is, to deprive himself of the trait of immortality. In other words, death and forgetting (in a sense a form of death)

---

[93] Calvino, *Le città invisibili*, p. 456.
[94] Calvino, 'La poubelle agréée', in his *Romanzi e racconti*, iii, pp. 59-79 (p. 65).

makes life valuable: 'la muerte (o su alusión) hace preciosos y patéticos a los hombres'.[95]

For Borges and Calvino, the labyrinth is the embodiment of the unpresentable complexity of the city, with all its hidden passages and meandering routes representing the seductive aspect of the city that leads to human entrapment and alienation. It is also a site of monstrosity as its inhabitants are succumbed to its interminable multiplication and confusion, which they can neither make sense of nor represent. Both authors seem to offer similar solutions: people need to accept the infernal multiplicity of the labyrinth and learn not to absorb everything. Unlike Funes, who absorbs all reality in its original minutiae, the inhabitants of the labyrinth need to learn that sometimes an act of letting go, of rejection, is crucial to their survival. If the city-labyrinth becomes a symbol of the multiplicity of reality which resists any act of representation, this act of rejection can be interpreted as a recognition of the human condition, an awareness of the need to accept the limits of human comprehension.

Representing the Unpresentable (I): Order and Chaos

We have earlier discussed how the city and the labyrinth become poignant metaphors for the multiplicity of reality that resists representation. Yet, these motifs can also be perceived as attempts by human beings to grasp the real in all its entirety, especially in the sense that these imaginary spaces embody the human need to find pattern in chaos. It is from this aspect that Diane Wolfe Levy associates the emergence of the city in literature with the notion of control: 'Nature is at best indifferent to man. The city, on the other hand, is his creation, and in it he must realise his own salvation and damnation'.[96] For Calvino, the

---

[95] Borges, 'El inmortal', p. 541.
[96] Diane Wolfe Levy, 'City Signs: Toward a Definition of Urban Literature', p. 66.

city is complex particularly because of this conflictual tension between order and chaos:

> Un simbolo più complesso, che mi ha dato le maggiori possibilità di esprimere la tensione tra razionalità geometrica e groviglio delle esistenze umane è quello della città.[97]

The city is not only a symbol of complexity, but also an extensive metaphor of our attempt to understand the complexity of the world. However, since the world is essentially complex, the construction of the city to order the stochastic world will become a nightmarish attempt, whose only result is its transformation into monstrous space, as exemplified by the labyrinthine prison of Piranesi and the City of the Immortals of Borges.

The failed attempt to impose order upon the chaotic world can be seen in one of the dialogues between the Khan and Polo in *Le città invisibili*. The Khan likes to find the underlying rules that govern the rise and fall of his cities; he identifies this process with playing chess: the more he plays chess, the better chance he will have to discover the underlying patterns of his empire. However, it does not take long for the Khan to realise that his reductive quest for the essential will naturally lead him to its extreme end: he will find out that eventually there exist only empty squares of plain wood, the nothingness *par excellence*.[98] Polo, however, warns the Khan of the nature of his reductive method and reminds him of the rich and unique quality of every object. While, for the Khan, the empty wooden square on the chessboard represents the status of nullity, its meaning is

---

[97] Calvino, *Lezioni americane*, p. 689.

[98] Cannon identifies the Khan's attitude with that of the structuralist: 'By reducing his empire to its essence, a system of pure differences corresponding to the squares on the chessboard, he has taken the ultimate step of the structuralist. From the individual variants, he has arrived at the invariable model' (Cannon, *Italo Calvino: Writer and Critic*, p. 89).

inexhaustible for Polo. That empty square becomes a sign which leads endlessly to others:

> La tua scacchiera, sire, è un intarsio di due legni: ebano e acero. Il tassello sul quale si fissa il tuo sguardo illuminato fu tagliato in uno strato del tronco che crebbe in un anno di siccità: vedi come si dispongono le fibre? Qui si scorge un nodo appena accennato: una gemma tentò di spuntare in un giorno di primavera precoce, ma la brina della notte l'obbligò a desistere [...].[99]

Polo reveals to the Khan the multiplicity and inexhaustibility of the real. If the Khan's attempt represents one that imposes order upon chaos, Polo's is the subversive one: his is a manifestation that chaos cannot be tamed.

For this reason, the resistance of multiple reality to any act of representation in a way can be compared to chaos that cannot be completely ruled by order. Borges also analyses the interaction between the two poles in 'La biblioteca de Babel'. The architecture of Borges's eccentric library is modelled on his imagination: with the aid of geometrical patterns, this intellectual site occupies infinite space both in height and in area. It consists of an innumerable series of hexagonal galleries connected through adjacent vestibules and spiral staircases. In each gallery stand twenty bookshelves, each of which has thirty-two books of identical format. Each book has four hundred and ten pages; each page consists of forty lines and each line has around eighty black letters. The library is built on the premise that 'una esfera cuyo centro cabal es cualquier hexágono, cuya circunferencia es inaccesible'.[100] Borges derives this premise from Blaise Pascal's centrifugal definition of universe.[101] Elsewhere Borges also analyses the

---

[99] Calvino, *Le città invisibili*, p. 469.
[100] Borges, 'La biblioteca de Babel', p. 466.
[101] 'La naturaleza es una esfera infinita, cuyo centro está en todas partes y la circunferencia en ninguna.' Borges discusses the development of this centrifugal universe in 'La esfera de Pascal',

historical context in which Pascal formulated his meaning of the universe, arguing that Pascal tried to hold onto the idea of God as a supreme being in an age when the universe was believed to be governed by its own chaotic system:

> [Pascal] deploró que no hablara el firmamento, comparó nuestra vida con la de náufragos en una isla desierta. Sintió el peso incesante del mundo físico, sintió vértigo, miedo y soledad [...].[102]

The library of Babel, in this light, becomes an objectification of Pascal's idea of a chaotic world, in which there is no singular centre from which the world can be perfectly scrutinised. Each gallery is an autonomous entity and becomes a valid centre on its own.

Looked at in a wider perspective, the infinite library is Borges's image of the philosophical attempt to bring order to a chaotic universe, not unlike the Khan's attempt to find the underlying patterns of his empire. The identification of the library with the universe is obvious: Borges's story starts with the illuminating phrase 'El universo (que otros llaman la Biblioteca) se compone de un número indefinido [...]'.[103] Its clear and precise divisions into galleries and vestibules are a form of geometrical patterns that are used with a view to shedding light on the inherent motifs of the world. For Gerhard Joseph, the library represents the human hope of imposing orderly patterns upon chaos:

> The enclosed library offers a relief to that threat [that the chaos of the universe seems beyond human control] because, perhaps more than any other institution,

---

in which he concludes that perhaps the human history is the history of the intonation of several metaphors. Of course, one of these metaphors is this infinite sphere. See Borges, 'La esfera de Pascal', in his *Obras completas 1923-1972*, pp. 636-38 (first publ. 1951).

[102] Borges, 'La esfera de Pascal', p. 638.

[103] Borges, 'La biblioteca de Babel', p. 465.

> it satisfies the human passion for method, for system, for tally coherent pattern. And to the extent that even the library is a kind of labyrinth [...], to the extent that it contains residual intimations of the world's multitudinousness, its catalogue serves as the final hedge against disorder [...].[104]

However, the infinite size of the library dashes this hope: an infinite series of the galleries makes impossible the search for a magical book which is believed to contain the secrets of the order of the universe.[105] While the Khan renounces his attempt to analyse the patterns of his empire because of the multiplicity of the real, the infinite character of the world, which Borges emphasises towards the end of the story,[106] thwarts an attempt to discover the order of the world. Like the dialogues between the Khan and Polo, Borges's library is a testimony to the defeat of human beings in the face of chaos.

Representing the Unpresentable (II): The Impossibility of Cartography

Borges's library is like the City of the Immortals and Piranesi's imaginary prison in the sense that, because they relentlessly wish to reflect the complexity essential to the constitution of the world, they become a space of monstrosity, which is both too endlessly multiple and complicated for human beings to comprehend. This passionate desire to reflect the complexity of the world can be associated with the act of mapping, especially when it involves a human urge to shape and model the overwhelming details of reality through human empirical

---

[104] Gerhard Joseph, 'The Labyrinth and the Library *en abyme*: Eco, Borges, Dickens ...', in *City Images: Perspectives from Literature, Philosophy, and Film*, ed. by Mary Ann Caws (New York, Philadelphia, and London: Gordon and Breach, 1991), pp. 42-59 (p. 53).

[105] The infinite quantity of the galleries in Borges's library may be attributed to the city blocks of Buenos Aires itself, which seem to multiply themselves endlessly. Grau analyses a poem by Borges 'Arrabal', in which Borges describes how a wanderer in Buenos Aires naturally feels fatigued since the city seems to expand infinitely. See Grau, *Borges y la arquitectura*, pp. 41-42.

[106] 'Acado de escribir *infinita*. No he interpolado ese adjetivo por una costumbre retórica; digo que no es ilógico pensar que el mundo es infinito' (Borges, 'La biblioteca de Babel', p. 471. His italics).

faculties. However, since the city constantly changes and grows, like reality which is essentially inexhaustible, the success of mapping is dubious. Calvino's 'Eudossia' is an invisible city which can be used to illustrate this point. For people in Eudossia, the patterns of the city are believed to be reflected in the design of a holy carpet, which is laid out in repeated symmetrical motifs. For some, the presence of this carpet testifies to the fact that the complexity of the city itself can be reduced to geometrical patterns, as evidenced in the carpet motifs. Nevertheless, Calvino mentions the dissimilarity between the two objects, the carpet and the city, and wonders which is the consecrated object bestowed by the gods to reflect the order of the universe. People in Eudossia believe that the carpet is of divine origin since it reflects the inherent patterns of the city. Calvino, however, raises a different observation, suggesting that perhaps the city itself may be just as divine in that its chaotic formation reflects the chaotic origin of the universe itself:

> [...] che la vera mappa dell'universo sia la città d'Eudossia così com'è, una macchia che dilaga senza forma, con vie tutte a zigzag, case che franano una sull'altra nel polverone, incendi, urla nel buio.[107]

What Calvino implies here is that the real map of the universe is not the carpet, which reduces the complex details to geometrical patterns, but rather the city, the space in which much of its complex arrangement and development is intrinsically chaotic. It is natural that human beings tend to feel frustrated when they find that the map and the original are not in exact agreement. They harbour the feeling that they need to possess the perfect map in order to lessen the possibility of becoming lost in the labyrinthine city. However, the fact that they can never get hold of that map exacerbates their frustration. The impossibility of

---

[107] Calvino, *Le città invisibili*, p. 441.

this cartographical project is also touched upon in one of Borges's short parables originally published in *El hacedor*:

> ... En aquel Imperio, el Arte de la Cartografía logró tal Perfección que la mapa de una sola Provincia ocupaba toda una Ciudad, y el mapa del imperio, toda una Provincia. Con el tiempo, esos Mapas Desmesurados no satisfacieron y los Colegios de Cartógrafos levantaron un Mapa del Imperio, que tenía el tamaño del Imperio y coincidía puntualmente con él. Menos Adictas al Estudio de la Cartografía, las Generaciones Siguientes entendieron que ese dilatado Mapa era Inútil y no sin Impiedad lo entregaron a las Inclemencias del Sol y de los Inviernos. En los desiertos del Oeste perduran despedazadas Ruinas del Mapa, habitadas por Animales y por Mendigos; en todo el País no hay otra reliquia de las Disciplinas Geográficas.[108]

For Borges, the ideal map is in fact one whose size and dimension correspond with the city itself. It ludicrously covers the whole city and finally becomes ruins, providing shelter for animals and beggars. What Borges implies here is not only the futility of human desire for perfection in cartography; he also scoffs at the blind faith human beings have in such a state of perfection.

Like the carpet in Calvino's Eudossia, mapping always implies a certain degree of reductive simplification both in size and dimension, and this provides the reason why the original and the map cannot correspond at every single point. In addition to 'Eudossia', Calvino also addresses such cartographical limits in 'Il conte di Montecristo',[109] in which he depicts the lives of two inmates, Edmond Dantés and Abbé Faria, locked up in the Castle of If. They attempt to find an exit

---

[108] Borges, 'Del rigor en la ciencia', in his *Obras completas 1923-1972*, p. 847 (first publ. 1960). Borges claims that this passage is from Suárez Miranda, *Viajes de varones prudentes* (1658).
[109] Calvino, 'Il conte di Montecristo', in his *Romanzi e racconti*, ii, pp. 344-56.

from the Castle in their own separate ways; in explaining their two disparate systems of rationale, Calvino analyses the two lines of thought that people take up when they need to plot their escape from the labyrinth. For Abbé Faria, the only way to discover an egress from the labyrinth is a taxing process of trial and error: '[l'Abate Faria] riscontra una difficoltà, studia una soluzione, esperimenta la soluzione, urta contro una nuova difficoltà, progetta una nuova soluzione, e così via'.[110] Abbé Faria starts from a simple map of the labyrinth and, after a series of discoveries, the details of his map begin to multiply. Edmond Dantés, on the other hand, follows another line of thought: his map is complicated as he does not think that there is any exit in the design of this castle. With the aid of Abbé Faria's discoveries, Dantés tries to lessen the complexity of his map by using geometrical forms:

> io [Dantés] partendo dal disordine di questi dati, vedo in ogni ostacolo isolato l'indizio d'un sistema d'ostacoli, sviluppo ogni segmento in una figura regolare, saldo queste figure come facce d'un solido, poliedro o iperpoliedro, iscrivo questi poliedri in sfere o in ipersfere, e così più chiudo la forma della fortezza più la semplifico, definendola in un rapporto numerico o in una formula algebrica.[111]

Abbé Faria and Edmond Dantés begin their thinking processes at different ends: the former commences at the simplest end and gradually accumulates details in his map, whereas the most complicated one is preferred by the latter and its complexity is gradually reduced once Dantés starts to learn the underlying designs or patterns of the prison.

---

[110] Calvino, 'Il conte di Montecristo', p. 349.
[111] Calvino, 'Il conte di Montecristo', p. 350.

Like the labyrinthine city and the library in Borges's 'El inmortal' and 'La biblioteca de Babel' respectively, 'Il conte di Montecristo' displays the need of human beings to impose order upon chaos. Yet, as we have seen from Borges's 'Del rigor en la ciencia' and Calvino's 'Eudossia', complete mapping is impossible since it means that the size and dimension of the map need to precisely correspond with the city. However, here lies a key difference between Borges and Calvino. While Borges looks at an act of cartography pessimistically, thinking that mapping, or the attempt to impose order on the world, is impossible since the city (and, by extension, the universe) is too complex and rich to be completely rendered into any kind of representation, Calvino tends to consider the issue from a more positive standpoint. His analysis of mapping in 'Il conte di Montecristo' not only sheds light upon the limits of mapping and its futility, but also emphasises the need of human beings to map the castle, to impose order upon chaos, even though they know that eventually their attempt may be futile. This can be seen from his own position that he proposes towards the end of the story: he does not privilege Abbé Faria's or Dantés's lines of thought. However, if they cannot eventually find their way out, Dantés will probably enjoy solace since his system of thought does not guarantee the possibility of escape from the beginning:

> Se riuscirò col pensiero a costruire una fortezza da cui è imposibile fuggire, questa fortezza pensata o sarà uguale alla vera – e in questo caso è certo che di qui non fuggiremo mai; ma almeno avremo raggiunto la tranquillità di chi sa che sta qui perché non potrebbe trovarsi altrove – o sarà una fortezza dalla quale la fuga è ancora più imposibile che di qui [...][112]

[112] Calvino, 'Il conte di Montecristo', p. 356.

Dantés views the complexity of the world as a given, as a fact that is taken as truth from the outset. His search is more sophisticated than Abbé Faria's in the sense that he is aware of the possible futility of his attempt before embarking on searching.[113] Nevertheless, he carries on his project because mapping is part of the human need to ensure that there may be order inherent in the world, not unlike Borges's librarians who set out on their doomed journeys to find the book that contains the secret of the universe.

Despite the difference in their attitudes, both Borges and Calvino revel in exploring the limits of our comprehension of the world through their use of spatial images, be they the city, the labyrinth, or the library. These spatial images are similar in their intrinsic complexity and in their resistance to any form of human rationalisation. In this aspect, they can be considered to be another manifestation of the conflict between reality and representation, with these spatial images never surrendering themselves to an attempt at complete representation. Moreover, these images signal the need of human beings to impose order upon the chaotic world, while simultaneously pointing out that such an attempt is bound to fail. Representation, in other words, is necessary, since without it human beings will never be able to understand the world at all; yet, their comprehension is overshadowed by the fact that they will never gain access to the absolute real.

---

[113] Interestingly, Bruno Ferraro suggests that this humble acceptance of the unpresentable complexity of the world may perhaps lead to a new order out of chaos: '[...] una volta che l'uomo abbia imparato a rinunciare al suo orgoglio e abbia acquisito una certa umiltà nel suo agire; solo in questo modo potrà egli togliersi dal caos e conquistare un *nuovo* ordine [...]' (Bruno Ferraro, 'Il castello dell'If e la sua struttura in *Le città invisibili* di Italo Calvino', *Letteratura Italiana Contemporanea*, 22 (1987), 95-113 (p. 105). His italics).

Chapter 5

Imprisonment, Games, and the Human Condition

Borges and Calvino explore the conflictual relationship between representation and reality from several angles. The previous chapter discussed how their explorations are rendered spatially in their works: with language and cognitive processes actively mediating and influencing the construction of representational practices, their narratives show how the spatial motifs of the city and the labyrinth become seductive and prison-like, symbolising both the human wish to to go in search of the absolutes and its failure caused by the pullulant, multiple details of the real, which are irreducible to any mapping pattern. This chapter will analyse further how humankind is deterred from attaining the absolutes by focusing on the motif of entrapment, showing how an individual is incarcerated in his or her own representational system as well as how this aspect of the human condition can be discussed in the light of game playing.

By retracing certain points made in earlier chapters, the first part will discuss how language and cognition engender a sense of entrapment whilst constituting our representational system; then the attention will be focused on how these systems can be compared to games, since game playing can also mean being trapped in a situation whereby the player's knowledge of the game outcomes is limited. It also aims to show, through the narratives of Borges and Calvino, how the ludic world is similar to the real world, especially in the sense that both worlds are framed by arbitrary ground rules and most of their inhabitants are ignorant of their own imprisonment. Values and ideals are significant topics in this chapter, as they, like language and cognition, form part of such ground rules that invisibly constitute an individual's representational system. The last section is intended to shed light upon the motif of godgame, a word coined by John Fowles to designate a specific situation in which the ignorance of game players is specially

highlighted as they are not sure whether they play a game, thereby subjecting themselves to the invisible control of some unknown bodies.[1] This can in turn be used to illuminate the human condition, in which humans are viewed as being confined in their own representational systems. Whilst focusing on analysing the motifs of game playing and entrapment in the narratives of the two authors, this chapter also aims to discern the difference in their general attitudes towards and treatments of these topics.

Entrapment and the Human Condition

Borges and Calvino touch upon the motif of entrapment from various perspectives. In the first chapter, we saw how language, despite being a communicative tool, imprisons its users: worlds can be conjured, in which words describing an object can make it assume another life, neither similar to nor totally different from the object in its 'real' state. This can be related to Foucault's modern episteme, in which the real is no longer at one with its textual representation. In 'El Aleph', for instance, Borges the narrator has difficulties describing the appearance of the Aleph since it defies human concepts of time, space, and textual description. Calvino also explores this aspect of language in one of his invisible cities, 'Aglaura', in which he discusses how ancient and modern travellers to the city have created various accounts of the city and these accounts become more and more significant than the city itself: 'la città che dicono ha molto di quel che ci vuole per esistere, mentre la città che esiste al suo posto, esiste meno'.[2] Words become more powerful than the existence of the city itself as these textual accounts play an active role in constructing a solid, compact

[1] The word 'godgame' appears passim in Fowles's novel *The Magus* (London: Vintage, 1997; first publ. 1966). In the preface to the revised edition, Fowles notes that *The Godgame* is an alternative title, the rejection of which he still sometimes regrets (See his 'Preface', *The Magus*, p. 10).

[2] Calvino, *Le città invisibili*, p. 413.

image of the city. The narrator also points towards his inadequacy in describing the city. Even though sometimes he is able to see a magnificent, rare scene there, he cannot put this into words:

> [...] a certe ore, in certi scorci di strade, vedi aprirtisi davanti il sospetto di qualcosa d'inconfondibile, di raro, magari di magnifico; vorresti dire cos'è, ma tutto quello che s'è detto d'Aglaura finora *imprigiona* le parole e t'obbliga a ridire anziché a dire.[3]

The narrator is discouraged from describing these rare moments because words seem to him 'imprisoning' as they are also used by those travellers who wrote earlier accounts of the city. The meaning of words is thus affected and limited by their early use.

Like Calvino, Borges also deplores the way in which the richness of human experience can be diminished as it is filtered through language in his 'Funes el memorioso'. Even though Funes manages to create a comprehensive linguistic system which can be used to convey the richness and intricacy of his own experience, his attempt at linguistic representation of the real does not succeed. He cannot communicate that richer experience to other people as his language is too complex to be shared or understood by others; his project fails because of one of the main features of language, i.e. the fact that it needs to be sufficiently systematic and logical. The ending sees Funes being incarcerated in his own infernal mind, suffering from his own acute perception of every minute change surrounding him:

---

[3] Calvino, *Le città invisibili*, p. 413. My italics.

> Funes, de espaldas en el catre, en la sombra, se figuraba cada grieta y cada moldura de las casas precisas que lo rodeaban. (Repito que el menos importante de sus recuerdos era más minucioso y más vivo que nuestra percepción de un goce físico o de un tormento físico.)[4]

Funes's own language and perceptive cognition becomes a prison house that terrorises him. Calvino's *Il castello dei destini incrociati* explores a similar aspect, as the narrative can also be read as a metaphor of how language, like tarot cards, filters and organises human experience. In one of its stories, 'Anch'io cerco di dire la mia', the narrator describes an act of writing and attempts to analyse the nature of textual signs through the card of two coins:

> Il *Due di Denari* anche per me è un segno di scambio, di quello scambio che è in ogni segno, dal primo ghirigoro tracciato in modo da distinguersi dagli altri ghirigori del primo scrivente, [...] la lettera che non va presa alla lettera, la lettera che trasvaluta i valori che senza lettera non valgono niente, la lettera sempre pronta a crescere su se stessa e a ornarsi dei fiori del sublime, vedila qui istoriata e fiorita sulla sua superficie significante [...].[5]

For Calvino, signs are not only significant in that they facilitate exchange and communication of ideas, they also provide the channel through which such exchange is made possible. This leads to a recognition that, without language, humans cannot express their ideas. The use of language is thus double-edged: not only does it facilitate our communicative process, language also plays an active part in the construction of reality by shaping and framing our thoughts, providing grids through which our thoughts can be formulated.

---

[4] Borges, 'Funes, el memorioso', p. 490.
[5] Calvino, *Il castello dei destini incrociati*, pp. 591-92. His italics.

The works of Borges and Calvino are also concerned with the processes and patterns of knowledge conceptualisation, which are not only filtered through language but also mediated by other aspects, such as the locus of the individual in his or her own temporal and spatial frameworks, as well as his or her interaction with the body of knowledge itself. The inevitable mediation of this 'human' quality can be seen in Calvino's *Cosmicomiche* stories, where the protagonist, Qfwfq, is given human characteristics throughout, despite his protean forms, reflecting that an anthropocentric system of thinking cannot be avoided. For Calvino, anthropomorphism becomes an entrapment and should be considered as part of the human condition:

> la scienza m'interessa proprio nel mio sforzo per uscire da una conoscenza antropomorfa; ma nello stesso tempo sono convinto che la nostra immaginazione non può essere che antropomorfa[6]

This is because, in gaining knowledge, humans use conceptual tools which are invented to help them construe the mechanisms of nature, but which, like language, turn out to mediate and influence the real. In 'Tigres azules', for example, Borges accentuates how much we need to make sense of our natural surroundings by inventing arithmetic, a tool which is intended to gain insight into nature, while 'Emma Zunz' can be read as the protagonist's willful creation of an incident (her alleged rape) to provide a sufficiently reasonable excuse to kill her boss. What Borges stresses here is that logical tools are shown to be human constructs and that they are liable to be manipulated and distorted.

Borges and Calvino aim to show how much we are enslaved by these conceptualising processes which filter our search for knowledge. We are

---

[6] Calvino, *Lezioni americane*, p. 706.

imprisoned by the tools that we have invented for ourselves. Like language, they facilitate our search for knowledge and at the same time function as intermediary agents which screen and entrap the knowledge production. The narratives of the two authors reflect how much these characteristics of the human condition shape as well as limit our inquiry into nature. This motif of entrapment is also explored in the spatial form of the labyrinth, which is seen as a space in which the need of human beings to order and categorise reality encounters the richness and multiplicity of the real. Mapping provides a key to liberation from this prison space but it is seen as futile and reductive. Calvino's 'Il conte di Montecristo' provides a portrayal of the futility of cartographical attempts: both Edmond Danté s and Abbé Faria seek to escape from the Castle of If but no egress is promised at the end of the story. The labyrinth in Borges's stories also implies a sense of imprisonment, rendering the inmates estranged and hopeless: 'La casa de Asterión' shows how the Minotaur itself suffers from alienation and imprisonment in its own space, while the two kings in 'Los dos reyes y los dos laberintos' are incarcerated in two different kinds of prison, i.e. the labyrinth and the desert. Borges and Calvino employ the labyrinth as a monstrous space to connote how, in attempting to ascertain the complexity of the real, representational practices that humans use incarcerate them, making them aware that they cannot transcend representational limits. For both authors, our endless search for absolute reality is likened to our interminable wandering in a monstrous labyrinth whereas absolute reality is analogous to the impossible exit.

From Entrapment to Game Playing: The Case of a Chess Game

While entrapment becomes one of the characteristics to which human beings are subjected in the narratives of Borges and Calvino, it often appears in the form of

game playing.[7] Even though at first glance the two concepts, entrapment and games, seem to bear little similarity, a comparative analysis of the two concepts can yield interesting results. One connection is the delineation of a specific territory: entrapment happens in a closed, confined space where prisoners are locked up; games also presuppose their own spatial boundaries. In defining a game, Roger Caillois uses this feature as one of the characterising ideas, arguing that a game is an activity 'circumscribed within limits of space and time, defined and fixed in advance'.[8] Johan Huizinga also stresses the distinctive separation of the play world from the actual world, claiming that game playing 'promotes the formation of social groupings which tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress their difference from the common world by disguise or other means'.[9]

The resemblance also exists at the level of structure: if in a labyrinth an inmate is driven to find an exit *by using only available means* (i.e. he or she is not allowed to know where the exit is, but needs to find it by depending upon their own resources), a player in a game is also compelled to gain a victory over other players *by using limited means*. In other words, the meaning of their actions is determined by certain ground rules that both constrain and shape their operations. The significant dependence of games upon rules is strongly argued by Bernard Suits:

---

[7] For more details on the concept and development of game playing, see Jerome S. Bruner, Alison Jolly, and Kathy Sylva, eds, *Play — Its Role in Development and Evolution* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976); Catherine Garvey, *Play* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1990; first publ. 1977); David Cohen, *The Development of Play*, 2nd edn (London and New York: Routledge, 1993; first publ. 1987).

[8] Roger Caillois, *Man, Play and Games*, trans. by Meyer Barash (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001; first publ. 1958), p. 9. This is only one of Caillois's six defining aspects of play. The other five include freedom, uncertainty, unproductivity, rule-governing, and make-believe.

[9] Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (London: Paladin, 1970; first publ. 1939), p. 32.

> to play a game is to engage in activity directed toward bringing about a specific state of affairs, using only means permitted by specific rules, where the means permitted by rules are more limited in scope than they would be in the absence of the rules, and where the sole reason for accepting such limitation is to make possible such activity.[10]

For Suits, rules not only compel players to use certain means to achieve satisfying results, but also provide an idea as to what characterises the end of a game. Winning, Suits argues, is not the end. In fact, the end is preset by rules as to how to make the winning possible.[11] Rules, therefore, provide both the means and the end of game playing. In addition, these rules need not be reasonable; their arbitrariness can be carried to extremes and they are not to be questioned. According to Huizinga, 'the rules of a game are absolutely binding and allow no doubt'.[12]

The links between entrapment and games can be found in the narratives of Borges and Calvino, prominent amongst which is the motif of a chess game. In 'Ajedrez',[13] Borges deals with the theme of human destiny by using the metaphor of the chess game. The specificity of the area where the game takes place and the significance of the rules are clearly stated:

---

[10] Bernard Suits, 'What Is a Game?', *Philosophy of Science*, 34 (1967), pp. 148-56 (p. 156). Roger Caillois also considers rules to be another defining feature of games, arguing that they operate 'under conventions that suspend ordinary laws, and for the moment establish new legislation, which alone counts' (Caillois, *Man, Play and Games*, p. 10).

[11] Suits, 'What Is a Game?', p. 156. Suits cites the example of a game of chess. The end sought by chess players is not to win, even though it apparently seems so: 'There is an end in chess analytically distinct from winning as an end. [...] The end in chess is, in a very restricted sense, to place one of the pieces on the board in a position such that the opponent's king is, in terms of the rules of chess, immobilised' (Suits, 'What Is a Game?', p. 155).

[12] Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, p. 30. Caillois also perceives the importance of rules in games: 'Rules are inseparable from play as soon as the latter becomes institutionalised. From this moment on they become part of its nature. They transform it into an instrument of fecund and decisive culture' (Caillois, *Man, Play and Games*, p. 27).

[13] Borges, 'Ajedrez', in his *Obras completas 1923-1972*, p. 813 (first publ. 1960).

En su grave rincón, los jugadores
Rigen las lentas piezas. El tablero
Los demora hasta el alba en su severo
Ámbito en que se odian dos colores.

Adentro irradian mágicos rigores
Las formas: torre homérica, ligero
Caballo, armada reina, rey postrero,
Oblicuo alfil y peones agresores.[14]

The first two stanzas of the poem outline the basic characteristics of the chess game, i.e. the secluded sphere where the game is held ('su grave rincón' and 'su severo ámbito') and the rigidity of the governing rules ('mágicos rigores'). However, for Borges, the chess game is by no means recreational. The adjectives 'grave' and 'severo' point towards the serious attitude he has towards the game. This is because Borges's chess game is also used as a symbol of human destiny over which an individual has no control. This can be seen in the second section of the poem, where Borges compares the players to the chess pieces. If the chess pieces are controlled by the players, the players are in turn governed by God, as Borges describes:

También el jugador es prisionero
(La sentencia es de Omar) de otro tablero
De negras noches y de blancos días.[15]

---

[14] Borges, 'Ajedrez', in his *Obras completas 1923-1972*, p. 813.
[15] Borges, 'Ajedrez', p. 813. The allusion to Omar probably relates a chess reference in Omar Khayyam's *Rubaiyat*, in which the following stanza appears:

'Tis all a Chequer-board of Nights and Days
Where Destiny with men for Pieces plays:
Hither and thither moves, and mates, and slays,
And one by one back in the Closet lays.

In this stanza, Borges emphasises the entrapment of human destiny by directly likening the player to the prisoner. In the same way, the chessboard becomes a *mise-en-scène* where such confinement occurs. However, the portrait of human entrapment is rendered even more starkly at the end of the poem:

> Dios mueve al jugador, y éste, la pieza.
> ¿Qué dios detrás de Dios la trama empieza
> De polvo y tiempo y sueño y agonías?[16]

Like 'Everything and Nothing', in which Shakespeare is compared to God in the sense that, even though they both conjure up a myriad of persons, they never know essentially who they themselves are or in whose dream they lead their lives, Borges argues in 'Ajedrez' that perhaps God is also another puppet, whose strings are manoeuvred by another entity. It is not the fact that there is no control whatsoever in nature that intensifies a sense of despair in this poem, but the fact that control exists in the form of rules and yet no one knows exactly where these rules are generated.[17] The rules of the chess game become a manifestation of human helplessness in face of predestination, reducing an individual to a chess piece controlled by an unknown player.

Calvino explores this metaphor further in his *Le città invisibili*. If Borges stresses the plight of human beings in their inability to direct their own fate, Calvino emphasises the need to recognise a design in nature, no matter how difficult or

---

For more details, see László Scholz, 'La metáfora del ajedrez en Borges y Calvino', *Borges, Calvino, la literatura*, i, 119-29 (p. 120).

[16] Borges, 'Ajedrez', p. 813.

[17] The same situation happens in Borges's 'La lotería en Babilonia', in which the Babilonians are governed by lottery rules, the development of which is mysterious. See also Chapter Four, in which the story is analysed in the context of urban alienation, which likewise generates a sense of imprisonment.

unrealistic this search is. For Calvino, game rules are analogous to such design: if humans are able to understand the rules of a game, they can also manage to crack the codes of this mysterious, elusive design. This is reflected in the Khan's belief that he can understand how to govern his vast empire in the same way that he learns the rules of the chess game: 'Se ogni città è come una partita a scacchi, il giorno in cui arriverò a conoscerne le regole possiederò finalmente il mio impero, anche se mai riuscirò a conoscere tutte le città che contiene'.[18] The rules of the chess game are not different from a map which prisoners need to have in order to escape from the prison. In order to discover the secret knowledge of the empire, 'l'ordine invisibile che regge le città, [le] regole cui risponde il loro soggere e prender forma e prosperare e adattarsi alle stagioni e intristire e cadere in rovina',[19] the Khan needs to find its hidden design, i.e. the rules, of the game:

> La conoscenza dell'impero era nascosta nel disegno tracciato dai salti spigolosi del cavallo, dai varchi diagonali che s'aprono alle incursioni dell'alfiere, dal passo strascicato e guardingo del re e dell'umile pedone, dalle alternative inesorabili d'ogni partita.[20]

Like Borges, Calvino uses the chess game as a metaphor to represent a search for destiny. While Borges in 'Ajedrez' portrays a stark picture of human helplessness and ignorance, Calvino's rendition is similarly negative: even though it is implicit in his narrative that a key lies hidden and, once discovered, can reveal the mystery of human destiny, his characters never find it. The elusiveness of the key or the design can be seen in the Khan's contemplation that once he recognises the importance of the search for order in the game of chess, the essence of the game continues to elude him:

---

[18] Calvino, *Le città invisibili*, p. 461.
[19] Calvino, *Le città invisibili*, p. 462.
[20] Calvino, *Le città invisibili*, p. 462.

> Il Gran Kan cercava d'immedesimarsi nel gioco: ma adesso era il perché del gioco a sfuggirgli. Il fine d'ogni partita è una vincita o una perdita: ma di cosa? Qual era la vera posta? Allo scacco matto, sotto il piede del re sbalzato via dalla mano del vincitore, resta un quadrato nero o bianco.[21]

Even though the Khan may be able to get a grip on the rules which may help him understand the order of the empire, the essence of the empire, as symbolised by the purpose of the chess game, still remains enigmatic. It can thus be argued that, for Borges and Calvino, the chess game is used to depict a sense of entrapment generated by the limits of human understanding, the inadequacy on the part of mankind to decipher the mechanisms of nature.

Life as a Game: From Game Rules to Chivalric and Ethical Values

There is also another interesting point that both Borges and Calvino take up when discussing chess games: the analogy between real life and game playing is highlighted by both authors. When discussing the game of chess in 'Ajedrez', Borges also includes another form of game playing:

> En el Oriente se encendió esta guerra
> Cuyo anfiteatro es hoy toda la tierra.
> Como el otro, este juego es infinito.[22]

War, for Borges, is compared to a chess game and the land where the war is waged is likened to a chessboard.[23] In the same way, the Khan in Calvino's *Le*

---

[21] Calvino, *Le città invisibili*, p. 462.
[22] Borges, 'Ajedrez', p. 813.
[23] Huizinga also considers war to be a type of game since it is also bound by certain codes. For more details, see his *Homo Ludens*, esp. pp. 110-26. Interestingly, war strategies are known to be

città invisibili also reflects upon chess games in order to comprehend the order of his empire. To the Khan, chess games, which take place on a chessboard (a ludic space), shed light upon the development of real space. Game playing is no longer solely operative in the play world, it is also relevant in the actual world.

From these narratives, it can be said that both authors seek to question the borderlines between ludic and actual worlds and hint at affinities between the two. The connections between game playing and real life are also acknowledged by various scholars. Huizinga, for example, discounts the conception that play does not necessitate a serious attitude on the player's part and argues that 'there is nothing to prevent us from interpreting a cultural phenomenon that takes itself with marked seriousness [...] as play'.[24] Since in games one needs to abide by certain rules, some of which are arbitrary, such total commitment to the rules does make one realise how the play world resembles the actual one, in which one also needs to observe various sets of rules, some of which are just as capricious. In a sense, game playing mirrors as well as interrogates our construction of the actual world.[25]

---

derived from those of a chess game, especially in the Far East. It is possible that Borges is referring to Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* here. For more details on the connection between Borges's and the Chinese text, see Balderston, *Out of Context*, pp. 42-43.

[24] Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, p. 218.

[25] Jacques Ehrmann, however, criticises Huizinga's attempt to theorise the ludic world. Ehrmann claims that Huizinga takes what he means by reality for granted, arguing that 'if the status of 'ordinary life', of 'reality', is not thrown into question *in the very moment of thought given over to play*, the theoretical, logical, and anthropological bases on which this thinking is based can only be extremely precarious and contestable' (Ehrmann, 'Homo Ludens Revisited', trans. by Cathy and Phil Lewis, *Yale French Studies*, 41 (1968), pp. 31-57 (p. 33) His italics). Ehrmann realises the deconstructive nature of play and urges a revision of notions of reality in the light of play since, for him, developments of reality and play are simultaneous and complex. Ehrmann's conclusion leads to a redefinition of play and reality and this highlights a more fluid connection between play and life: '[...] in an anthropology of play, play cannot be defined by isolating it on the basis of its relationship to an *a priori* reality and culture. To define play is *at the same time* and *in the same movement* to define reality and to define culture. As each term is a way to apprehend the two others, they are each elaborated, constructed through and on the basis of the two others. None of these three existing prior to the others, they are all simultaneously the subject and the object of the question which they put to us and we to them' (Ehrmann, p. 55. His italics).

In *Il cavaliere inesistente*,[26] Calvino uses the chivalric world of the Middle Ages to show how the observation of chivalric rules can be regarded as a form of game playing. Calvino's narrative centres around a knight, Agilulfo, who is obsessed with chivalric rules and whose life is solely dedicated to the perpetration of knightly codes. His excessive enthusiasm for these codes can be seen in his keen interest in titles and ranks. When Emperor Charlemagne asks Agilulfo his name, the knight proudly answers with his full title, so lengthy that it inevitably gives comical effect:

> — Io sono, — la voce giungeva metallica da dentro l'elmo chiuso, come fosse non una gola ma la stessa lamiera dell'armatura a vibrare, e con un lieve rimbombo d'eco, — Agilulfo Emo Bertrandino dei Guildiverni e degli Altri di Corbentraz e Sura, cavaliere di Selimpia Citeriore e Fez![27]

The knight's excessive preoccupation with rule-keeping is also reflected in his armour. To the amazement of Emperor Charlemagne, Agilulfo is wearing white spotless armour without any scratches. He is described in detail as:

> un cavaliere dall'armatura tutta bianca; solo una righina nera correva torno torno ai bordi; per il resto era candida, ben tenuta, senza un graffio, ben rifinita in ogni giunto, sormontata sull'elmo da un pennacchio di chissà che razza orientale di gallo, cangiante d'ogni colore dell'iride.[28]

---

[26] Calvino, *Il cavaliere inesistente*, in his *Romanzi e racconti*, i, 953-1064 (first publ. 1959).
[27] Calvino, *Il cavaliere inesistente*, p. 957. According to Mario Barenghi, the long title of Agilulfo is a kind of 'nonsense' nursery rhyme, made up of weird words. While Fez is a city in Morocco, Barenghi does not think that Corbentraz, Selimpia, and Citeriore exist outside Calvino's work. See Mario Barenghi, 'Il cavaliere inesistente: note e notizie sui testi', in Calvino, *Romanzi e racconti*, i, 1361-65 (p. 1364).
[28] Calvino, *Il cavaliere inesistente*, p. 957.

If the armour can represent the knight's personality, Agilulfo can be interpreted as an extreme ramification of chivalric ideals, the codes of which are held in high esteem by knights.

More light is shed on Agilulfo's reasoning when we learn that he does not 'exist' in the sense that he does not have a human body under his immaculate white armour. However, he is able to carry out tasks assigned to him simply by will power and 'la fede nella nostra santa causa'.[29] His existence, since it is not corporeal, hinges only on his faith in the holy cause; he exists solely because he believes in chivalric and moral codes. His extraordinary existence, therefore, accounts for his mania for the strict observance of such codes. Nevertheless, his lack of a human body is not a cause for despair. He even feels proud and superior since that means he can avoid human traits that are sometimes in disagreement with chivalric ideals:

> Posso ben dirmi privilegiato, io che posso farne senza e fare tutto. Tutto — si capisce — quel che mi sembra più importante; e molte cose riesco a farle meglio di chi esiste, senza i loro soliti difetti di grossolanità, approssimazione, incoerenza, puzzo.[30]

For Agilulfo, not having a human body means that his attempt to abide by chivalric codes will not be frustrated since he has dispensed with coarseness, approximation, incoherence, and smell, which are basic features that accompany human corporeity, and which, to the knight's terror, unwittingly lead to human imperfection.[31] Agilulfo's fear of these characteristics leads to his maniacal

---

[29] Calvino, *Il cavaliere inesistente*, p. 958.
[30] Calvino, *Il cavaliere inesistente*, p. 998.
[31] A scene which reveals the conflict between the 'imperfect' human traits and the 'perfect' chivalric rules is a banquet scene hosted by Emperor Charlemagne, which Agilulfo never misses, even though he neither feels appetite nor eats any food. However, it provides the non-existent

hatred for the human body. For example, he cannot fall asleep as he contemplates this hatred. The sight of protruding human feet makes him feel ill at ease:

> Lo colpiva e inquietava di più la vista dei piedi ignudi che spuntavano qua e là dall'orlo delle tende, gli alluci verso l'alto: l'accampamento nel sonno era il regno dei corpi, una distesa di vecchia carne d'Adamo, esalante il vino bevuto e il sudore della giornata guerresca [...].[32]

Agilulfo views the human body as imperfect and deems it inferior to his own conception of chivalric ideals. Furthermore, he also contemplates the connection between the human body and Adam's, which, even though it is made in the form of faultless God, is far from perfect. The fact that Adam lets himself be persuaded by Eve to eat an apple from the forbidden Tree of Knowledge is also poignant here. Adam becomes a symbol of imperfection since, failing to observe God's rules, he is expelled from the Garden of Eden. Since rules and regulations are significant for Agilulfo, he has an intense hatred for Adam.

To understand better the character of the non-existent knight, it is worthwhile to compare his character to that of Gurdulù, a foil to the knight himself. His name is not exactly Gurdulù since people from different areas call him different names;[33] he is 'un uomo senza nome e con tutti i nomi possibili'.[34] Unlike the knight, Gurdulù is not preoccupied with ranks and titles, let alone minding what people call him. Even though he has a human body, Gurdulù is neither concerned with his human existence, nor lets it become an issue that determines his actions in the same way as the non-existent knight. When first appearing in the narrative,

---

knight with an opportunity to show the utmost care he takes in following dining etiquettes. See *Il cavaliere inesistente*, pp. 1011-12.

[32] Calvino, *Il cavaliere inesistente*, p. 961.

[33] For more details on Gurdulù's different names and their origins, see Barenghi, 'Il cavaliere inesistente: note e notizie sui testi', p. 1364.

[34] Calvino, *Il cavaliere inesistente*, p. 995.

Gurdulù does not believe that he is human. He enjoys imitating surrounding objects, be they ducks, frogs, fish, or pears.[35] The disparity between the knight and Gurdulù is made apparent, especially in terms of their concept of existence. The following dialogue between an old peasant and Emperor Charlemagne sheds light on their difference:

> — Che possiamo capirne noi, maestà? — Il vecchio ortolano parlava con la modesta saggezza di chi ne ha viste tante. — Matto forse non lo si può dire: è soltanto uno che c'è ma non sa d'esserci.
>
> — O bella! Questo suddito qui che c'è ma non sa d'esserci e quel mio paladino là che sa d'esserci e invece non c'è. Fanno un bel paio, ve lo dico io![36]

While Agilulfo is constantly aware of his existence, an awareness paradoxically based upon his 'non-being' status, Gurdulù is not in the least cognizant of his, even though he possesses a supposedly righteous claim to it, i.e. a body.

Armour is also a significant symbol here: while Gurdulù is depicted without any armour throughout the course of the narrative, Agilulfo is never portrayed without his. When Rambaldo, one of the aspiring young fighters, asks Agilulfo whether he needs to take off his armour, his answer is symbolically revealing:

> — E l'armatura non ve la togliete mai d'indosso?
>
> Tornò a mormorare. — Non c'è un indosso. Togliere o mettere per me non ha senso.[37]

---

[35] See Calvino, *Il cavaliere inesistente*, pp. 971-78.
[36] Calvino, *Il cavaliere inesistente*, p. 974.
[37] Calvino, *Il cavaliere inesistente*, p. 970.

Agilulfo is at one with his armour; without his armour, he simply ceases to exist. If armour comes to symbolise chivalric rules and moral codes, Agilulfo becomes an objectification of these rules and regulations *par excellence*. However, it seems that only Agilulfo is in perfect agreement with his immaculate armour, while other paladins do not seem to fit in so perfectly with theirs. This incompatibility is reflected in Rambaldo's gradual disillusionment at the real status of the paladins when he has a chance to join their fight. At the beginning, Rambaldo thinks that a knight errant is glorious and dignified: 'Incontrava paladini già chiusi nelle loro corazze lustre, negli sferici elmi impennacchiati, il viso coperto dalla celata'.[38] However, when they take off their helmets, the disparity between Rambaldo's illusion as to what knight errants should be and the reality disconcerts him: '[...] lo sollevano staccando la barbuta dalla gorgera, e lo posano sul tavolo. E sotto gli elmi appaiono due teste calve, gialline, due facce dalla pelle un po' molle, tutta borse, e certi smunti baffi'.[39] The detailed description of the two knight errants contrasts with Rambaldo's concept of the immaculate, dignified paladins.

The polarity between appearance and reality that Rambaldo perceives when he contemplates chivalric ideals can be fruitfully interpreted in light of the notion of game playing. Chivalric ideals can be read as game rules and regulations that human beings try to impose upon their life, no matter how incompatible these codes may be.[40] According to J. R. Woodhouse:

---

[38] Calvino, *Il cavaliere inesistente*, p. 965.
[39] Calvino, *Il cavaliere inesistente*, pp. 965-66.
[40] Huizinga also argues that chivalry played a crucial role in a noble game of honour in the Middle Ages before it was subsequently developed into international law: 'Even if it were no more than a fiction, these fancies of war as a noble game of honour and virtue have still played an important part in developing civilisation, for it is from them that the idea of chivalry sprang and hence, ultimately, of international law' (Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, p. 117).

> Honour in the chivalrous sense, ideals such as those which Rambaldo has, are things basically alien to man, they form the appearance which does not correspond to the reality of man in his natural, unhindered and uninhibited state.[41]

The incompatibility between chivalric ideals or moral codes and the reality of mankind, therefore, produces an alienating effect, causing humans to feel shackled by rules and regulations which become increasingly burdensome. In this light, Agilulfo's life becomes a comical portrait of a devoted player who is committed to game rules and, because he is not truly human, does not believe that there are considerable discrepancies between these rules and what he can achieve in reality.

If Calvino's novel points towards the resemblance between chivalric codes and game rules, reinforcing his belief that game playing and life are essentially similar, Borges takes a step further and argues that perhaps abiding by our moral codes can be taken as a form of game playing as well. This fundamental relationship between game rules and ethical codes is analysed by Suits, in his attempt to argue that life is nothing but a kind of game one plays.[42] According to him, one plays at least two types of games in life, whether one is cognizant of them or not. In one game, 'death is the end the players are seeking, and the employment of certain means for achieving this end are forbidden by the rules [...]'.[43] The other is that 'each player is out to maximise his own pleasure [while not decreasing] the pleasure of any other player'.[44] Suits is discussing ethical codes here since both of the rules are basic ethical principles. The relationship

---

[41] J. R. Woodhouse, *Italo Calvino: A Reappraisal and an Appreciation of the Trilogy* (Hull: University of Hull, 1968), p. 22.
[42] Suits, 'Is Life a Game We Are Playing?', *Ethics*, 77 (1967), 209-13.
[43] Suits, 'Is Life a Game We Are Playing?', p. 210.
[44] Suits, 'Is Life a Game We Are Playing?', p. 210.

between ethical and game rules is distinct since Suits argues that in fact 'moral rules are game rules in disguise'.[45] He thus draws attention to the arbitrariness of moral rules and at the same time to the commitment that these rules exact from us, as they act as a framework, causing us to perceive the universe in a particular way. In a sense, the obligation to observe ethical codes can be said to imprison human beings: it locks them up in a representational system where sets of rules are strictly observed. Like players participating in a game who abide by game rules, human beings are absorbed in their life games and moral codes, which become an unquestioned basis of their representational practices. However, this can also yield negative consequences since humans are often led to believe that their particular moral codes are the only ones that exist and refuse to accept other ground rules. They play their life games 'seriously' and refuse to believe in the existence of other representational systems in which alternative codes are observed.[46]

In 'El informe de Brodie,'[47] Borges reworks Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and challenges the primacy of moral codes of 'civilised' society by juxtaposing them with those of a 'primitive' community, the Yahoos.[48] While the protagonist of *Gulliver's Travels* is an Englishman stranded on an island, which the Yahoos occupy, the protagonist of Borges's story, David Brodie, is a Scotsman travelling to Africa and Brazil. Working as a missionary, Brodie can be regarded as a representative of Western civilisation, attempting to cultivate 'less civilised' societies. Therefore, the juxtaposition of moral codes between the two unequally

---

[45] Suits, 'Is Life a Game We Are Playing?', p. 211.

[46] Game players, on the other hand, have what Suits calls a 'lusory' attitude, which determines their action in the game and allows them to quit the game whenever they wish. See Suits, *The Grasshopper: Games, Life and Utopia* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1978), p. 35.

[47] Borges, 'El informe de Brodie', in his *Obras completas 1923-1972*, pp. 1073-78 (first publ. 1970).

[48] Borges himself admits the allusion to Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* in his preface to *El informe de Brodie*: 'El texto que da nombre a este libro [*El informe de Brodie*] [...] manifestamente procede del último viaje emprendido por Lemuel Gulliver [...]' (Borges, 'Prólogo a El informe de Brodie', in his *Obras completas 1923-1972*, pp. 1021-23 (pp. 1021-22)).

'civilised' societies in his report is inevitable. Since the first page of the report is missing, it begins thus:

> ... de la región que infestan los hombres monos (*Apemen*) tienen su morada los *Mlch*, que llamaré Yahoos, para que mis lectores no olviden su naturaleza bestial y porque una precisa transliteración es casi imposible, dada la ausencia de vocales en su áspero lenguaje.[49]

Language is shown to be a hindrance that obstructs his research and prevents Brodie from gaining insight into the primitive community. The real name of the community is *Mlch*; however, since he is not accustomed to pronouncing a word without any vowel, he decides to call them the Yahoos instead.[50] The other reason why Brodie calls them the Yahoos is because the name connotes their 'bestiality',[51] in a way eliciting Brodie's main prejudice against the Yahoos. From his own perspective, partly constructed by his moral codes, Brodie is unable to view them without prejudgement. Like Agilulfo, he is already locked up in his own representational system and absorbed in a distinct set of codes. Thus he cannot study the Yahoos without placing their moral codes against his own.

---

[49] Borges, 'El informe de Brodie', p. 1073. His italics. Borges's use of parentheses in which English words are inserted appears a few times in this story. He strives to achieve a realistic effect in which English words are put alongside Spanish words in order to clarify the meaning, given the fact that the narrator-protagonist is a Scottish man, whose manuscript Borges tries to transcribe.

[50] In *Gulliver's Travels*, especially in Lemuel Gulliver's last trip to the country of the Houyhnhnms, in which he encounters both the Houyhnhnms and the Yahoos, Gulliver has no problem pronouncing the name of the Yahoos. On the contrary, it is the name of the former that troubles him: 'I could frequently distinguish the Word Yahoo, which was repeated by each of [the Houyhnhnms] several times; [...] I endeavoured to practice this word upon my Tongue; and as soon as they were silent, I boldly pronounced Yahoo in a loud Voice [...] Then the Bay tried me with a second Word, much harder to be pronounced; but reducing it to the English Orthography, may be spelt thus, Houyhnhnms. I did not succeed in this so well as the former' (Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, ed. by Robert A. Greenberg, 2nd edn (New York: Norton, 1970; first publ. 1726), p. 196).

[51] This is also probably because the Yahoos in Swift's travel narrative are a tribe marked by violence and cruelty.

'El informe de Brodie' not only plays upon prejudices of the 'civilised' against the 'primitive', it also shows the fragile foundation upon which such prejudices are established. At first glance, the structure of the Yahoos' community may appear different and full of violence and horror: it is a society which revolves around the figure of a king even though the main governing power is in the hands of four witchdoctors. They elect the king in a secret procedure: 'Cada niño que nace está sujeto a un detenido examen; si presenta ciertos estigmas, que no me han sido revelados, es elevado a rey de los Yahoos'.[52] After his limbs are amputated and his eyes are put out, the king is carried into a cave so that his wisdom cannot be distracted from the outside world.[53] Nevertheless, upon careful scrutiny, the Yahoo community also possesses similar traits to those of 'civilised' people. They have their own system of prohibited and permitted acts, even though sometimes this system seems to be very much different from that of the 'civilised':

> Se ocultan para comer o cierran los ojos; lo demás lo hacen a la vista de todos, como los filósofos cínicos. Devoran los cadáveres crudos de los hechiceros y de los reyes, para asimilar su virtud. Les eché en cara esa costumbre; se tocaron la boca y la barriga, tal vez para indicar que los muertos también son alimento o — pero esto acaso es demasiado sutil — para que yo entendiera que todo lo que comemos es, a la larga, carne humana.[54]

The Yahoos do not share our taboos surrounding public defecation.[55] Conversely, they regard eating in public, something that we find normal and far from

---

[52] Borges, 'El informe de Brodie', p. 1074.
[53] 'Acto continuo lo mutilan (he is gelded), le queman los ojos y le cortan las manos y los pies, para que el mundo no lo distraiga de la sabiduría' (Borges, 'El informe de Brodie', p. 1074).
[54] Borges, 'El informe de Brodie', p. 1074.
[55] Likewise, the Yahoos in Swift's narrative use defecation as a means to intimidate enemies. When Gulliver sees them for the first time, they attempt to attack him: 'Several of this cursed Brood getting hold of the Branches behind, leaped up into the Tree, from whence they began to discharge their Excrements on my Head [...]' (Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, p. 194).

shameful, a taboo. Eating and excreting are symbolically opposite activities concerning consumption. Whereas the 'civilised' find the thought of eating human flesh abhorrent, the Yahoos believe it is a sacred act, especially when one eats the flesh of the kings or the witchdoctors. In addition, unlike the 'civilised', the Yahoos refuse to live in a valley, where there are springs of fresh water and shady trees. They prefer to live closely together in the swamps which surround the plateau base, 'como deleitándose en los rigores del sol ecuatorial y de la impureza'.[56] Their belief in life after death is similar to that of the 'civilised' in that the existence of heaven and hell is accepted. However, their concepts as to the locations and characteristics of heaven and hell are not the same:

> Profesan [los hechiceros], a su modo, la doctrina del infierno y del cielo. Ambos son subterráneos. En el infierno, que es claro y seco, morarán los enfermos, los ancianos, los maltratados, los hombres-monos, los árabes y los leopardos; en el cielo, que se figuran pantanoso y oscuro, el rey, la reina, los hechiceros, los que en la tierra han sido felices, duros y sanguinarios.[57]

Those who are ill, old, and maltreated will go to hell, which is bright and dry, whereas those important figures, such as the king, the queen, and the witchdoctors, and those who are bloodthirsty and hardhearted will go to heaven, which is frightening and dark. This classification reflects the differing attitudes of the Yahoos towards those who contribute to the survival of the community and those who hinder its progress: since they obstruct the community's development, the aged and the sick are mercilessly lumped together with the Arabs and the Apemen, who are the enemies of the Yahoos, whereas those bloodthirsty and hardened people who do not hesitate to kill their enemies are believed to spend their afterlife in heaven. Even though the Yahoos' values and attitudes differ

---

[56] Borges, 'El informe de Brodie', p. 1074.
[57] Borges, 'El informe de Brodie', p. 1076.

from those that 'civilised' human beings hold in esteem, they reflect at least one similar trait: those who are powerful play a more influential role in constructing the systems of values and beliefs in their communities.

By exposing the reader to the different system of moral codes in which the Yahoos believe, Borges draws attention to the ethical system of 'civilised' society: by dint of this juxtaposition, moral codes in both societies are shown to be equally arbitrary and to a certain degree comparable. Both societies have their own system of values, of what they consider sacred and profane, agreeable and disgusting. The borderlines between the 'civilised' and the 'primitive' become gradually hazier towards the end of Brodie's narrative, when he begins to understand that somehow the Yahoos' culture and the 'civilised' one are not that different:

> Los Yahoos, bien lo sé, son un pueblo bárbaro, quizá el más bárbaro del orbe, pero sería una injusticia olvidar ciertos rasgos que los redimen. Tienen instituciones, gozan de un rey, manejan un lenguaje basado en conceptos genéricos, creen, como los hebreos y los griegos, en la raíz divina de la poesía y adivinan que el alma sobrevive a la muerte del cuerpo. Afirman la verdad de los castigos y de las recompensas. Representan, en suma, *la cultura*, como la representamos nosotros, pese a nuestros muchos pecados.[58]

Brodie's concept of 'culture' broadens towards the end of the narrative as Brodie accepts certain affinities between his and their systems of values.[59] His first

---

[58] Borges, 'El informe de Brodie', p. 1078. My italics.

[59] It should be pointed out here that the fact that Brodie comes from Scotland is also interesting in the sense that his culture is not a mainstream one; therefore, he is allowed 'a better view' of the cultural formation and how the mainstream culture tends to engulf marginal ones. In the same way, if we take the name 'the Yahoos' as allusive to Swift's work, Swift's perspective is akin to Brodie's in the sense that Swift came from another marginal culture, i.e. an Irish one. For Borges, coming from a marginal culture can have positive effect: 'Tratándose de los irlandeses, no tenemos por qué suponer que la profusión de nombres irlandeses en la literatura y la filosofía

impression of the Yahoos, especially the belief in their uncultured bestiality, is eventually challenged, unlike Gulliver's hostile attitude towards the Yahoos which remains unchanged throughout the course of Swift's narrative. While the discovery that Gulliver belongs to the same race as the Yahoos appalls him,[60] Brodie does not feel sorry to be able to identify himself with the Yahoos in the end. Even though 'la falta de imaginación los mueve [a los Yahoos] a ser crueles',[61] it does not mean that they are not cultured. They simply believe in another set of moral codes and values which are sometimes just as arbitrary as those of the 'civilised'. The origin of their system of representation, underpinned by a distinct yet equally arbitrary set of moral values, bears a striking similarity to that of human beings' system.

The resemblance between Borges's story and Calvino's *Il cavaliere inesistente* cannot be more obvious: as moral codes lock human beings into their own representational systems in 'El informe de Brodie', so chivalric ideals similarly imprison Agilulfo, whose excessive preoccupation with the codes of honour dehumanises him and becomes a significant cause of his isolation. Agilulfo does not understand the human condition since he is not fettered with the human body, in the same way that Brodie does not comprehend the Yahoos in the beginning of Borges's story as much of his perspective is conditioned by his unshakable moral codes. However, just as games cease to exist if people no longer believe in rules,

---

británicas se deba a una preeminencia racial, porque muchos de esos irlandeses ilustres (Shaw, Berkeley, Swift) fueron descendientes de ingleses, fueron personas que no tenían sangre celta; sin embargo, les bastó el hecho de sentirse irlandeses, distintos, para innovar en la cultura inglesa. Creo que los argentinos, los sudamericanos en general, estamos en una situación análoga; podemos manejar todos los temas europeos, manejarlos sin supersticiones, con una irreverencia que puede tener, y ya tiene, consecuencias afortunadas' (Borges, 'El escritor argentino y la tradición', in *his Obras completas 1923-1972*, pp. 267-274 (p. 273)). Borges regards himself as also coming from a marginal culture, i.e. an Argentine one; therefore, like Brodie and Swift, he is able to analyse the cultural formation from a different yet equally valid vantage point.

[60] 'This was Matter of Diversion to my Master and his Family [i.e. the Houyhnhnms], as well as of Mortification to my self. For now I could no longer deny, that I was a real Yahoo, in every limb and Feature [...]' (Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, p. 233).

[61] Borges, 'El informe de Brodie', p. 1075.

people cannot exist without their own moral codes or ideals. Both narratives also point towards the necessity for rules and codes. In 'El informe de Brodie', the ending reveals how Brodie considers the moral values of the Yahoos to be no less civilised than his. The fact that they have their own values can be used as a telling index of how much civilised they are, even though their meaning of civilisation is different from the one that Brodie and the 'civilised' hold. Calvino also recognises the indispensability of such codes, describing Agilulfo's need to perform his 'precise' exercises, which interestingly resemble basic childhood games: 'contare oggetti, ordinarli in figure geometriche, risolvere problemi d'aritmetica'.[62] Counting objects, ordering them in geometrical forms, and solving arithmetic puzzles in a way are symbols of how human beings make sense of the world. Agilulfo is fond of doing these exercises because they give him consolation that the world in which he lives still makes sense and is understandable through human logical powers. The fact that Agilulfo practises these exercises in the morning is also significant since, according to the narrator, it is the moment when objects become obscure because they start to lose their shadow and acquire their colour. In other words, the morning is the time when 'meno si è sicuri dell'esistenza del mondo'.[63] Agilulfo needs to confirm to himself that order exists in the world. Otherwise, a sense of vertigo might overwhelm him as he perceives that the whole world is melting away before him:

> Se invece il mondo intorno sfumava nell'incerto, nell'ambiguo, anch'egli si sentiva annegare in questa morbida penombra, non riusciva più a far affiorare dal vuoto un pensiero distinto, uno scatto di decisione, un puntiglio.[64]

---

[62] Calvino, *Il cavaliere inesistente*, p. 968.
[63] Calvino, *Il cavaliere inesistente*, p. 968.
[64] Calvino, *Il cavaliere inesistente*, pp. 968-69.

Understandably, the thought of the void overwhelms him more than others as he exists solely by 'the belief in holy cause', the faith in the order of the world. His existence singularly depends on such order; if it does not exist, neither does Agilulfo. However, Agilulfo is not the only person who has glimpsed the void. Rambaldo, seeing the knight practising the exercises, also realises the significance of Agilulfo's act and catches his own glimpse of the void:

> Rambaldo comprendeva che qui tutto andava avanti a rituali, a convenzioni, a formule, e sotto a questo, cosa c'era sotto? Si sentiva preso da uno sgomento indefinibile, a sapersi fuori di tutte queste regole del gioco ...[65]

For Rambaldo, these moral values and chivalric ideals, represented as rules and regulations that human beings impose on the world, are human constructs. Like language and other conceptual tools which are used to rationalise and mediate experience, human beings invent these ideals so that they can explain and make sense of the world, in the same way that Agilulfo invents his morning exercises to reassure himself that the order of the world exists. Rambaldo realises the arbitrary origin of such rules and codes and compares these to game rules: if players in a game need rules in order to play the game, human beings also need these codes in order to exist even if they may feel imprisoned in their own constructed system of representation.

Il barone rampante: Games, Rebellion, and Aristocracy

Il cavaliere inesistente and 'El informe de Brodie' remind us how much the structure of games resembles that of real life: the existence of rules and conventions is not only pivotal to games, it also plays a significant role in real

---

[65] Calvino, *Il cavaliere inesistente*, p. 969.

life. Even though rules are at times arbitrary, each individual needs these regulatory devices in order not to experience the void at the core of human existence. The important role of these regulatory codes is closely linked with the concept of idealism: humans need to formulate their own kind of ideals so as to feel that life is worthwhile. In a game, an ideal provides a satisfactory destination which players need to achieve, no matter how unrealistic this might be. In real life, an ideal similarly can become a source of inspiration that drives humans to achieve a goal. Ideals, in their role of making games and life meaningful, becomes one of the most important factors that affects the formulation of representational practices: if different values and moral codes cause humans to conceive of the world from disparate viewpoints, ideals help downplay the arbitrariness of these viewpoints, while enabling humans to persevere in perceiving the world through their preferred representational systems.

Calvino's *Il barone rampante*[66] portrays the essential role that idealism plays in life. The protagonist, Cosimo Piovasco di Rondò, is the eldest son of an aristocratic family. Nevertheless, he does not take to their luxurious and elegant lifestyle, embodied in the figure of his father, the Baron Arminio Piovasco di Rondò, who acts as a monarch ruling over the whole family in a rather tyrannical manner. The beginning of the narrative describes a scene in which the two brothers, Cosimo and Biagio, are present at the family dining table for the first time; the way they sit at the table reflects the ideal of aristocratic hierarchy to which the baron adheres:

> A capotavola era il Barone Arminio Piovasco di Rondò, nostro padre, con la parrucca lunga sulle orecchie alla Luigi XIV, fuori tempo come tante cose sue. Tra me e mio fratello sedeva l'Abate Fauchelafleur, elemosiniere della nostra

[66] Calvino, *Il barone rampante*, in his *Romanzi e racconti*, i, 547-777 (first publ. in 1957).

> famiglia ed aio di noi ragazzi. Di fronte avevamo la Generalessa Corradina di Rondò, nostra madre, e nostra sorella Battista, monaca di casa. All'altro capo della tavola, rimpetto a nostro padre, sedeva, vestito alla turca, il Cavalier Avvocato Enea Silvio Carrega, amministratore e idraulico dei nostri poderi, e nostro zio naturale, in quanto fratello illegittimo di nostro padre.[67]

Calvino uses this scene both to introduce the reader to the main characters in the narrative and to reflect the old-fashioned hierarchical belief to which they are subject. The father is depicted as wearing a long wig over his ears, an item that was no longer fashionable even at the time in which the narrative is set.[68] In a way, he becomes the personification of the obsolete values and beliefs that are later to be challenged.

The stress is apparent at the dining table, where the two brothers are expected to follow etiquette and behave like mature, cultured adults: 'Nostro padre, nostra madre sempre lì davanti, l'uso delle posate per il pollo, e sta' dritto, e via i gomiti dalla tavola, un continuo!'[69] It is not surprising to learn that, with the accumulation of stress and strain engendered by the strict adherence to rules and regulations, it is only a question of time before one of the two brothers rebels against the suffocating idealism of aristocracy. One day, Cosimo refuses to eat snails, despite his father's order. Cosimo's obstinacy angers his father and he orders Cosimo to leave the table. Not only does Cosimo leave the table, he leaves his whole family and chooses to live in the trees instead. The scene ends with his father's challenge and his snappish rebuttal:

---

[67] Calvino, *Il barone rampante*, p. 549.
[68] The year in which they were present at the dining table is 1767, i.e. during the Enlightenment.
[69] Calvino, *Il barone rampante*, p. 550.

> Nostro padre si sporse dal davanzale. — Quando sarai stanco di star lì cambierai idea! — gli gridò.
>
> — Non cambierò mai idea, — fece mio fratello, dal ramo.
>
> — Ti farò vedere io, appena scendi!
>
> — E io non scenderò più! — E mantenne la parola.[70]

No one at that time believes that Cosimo will keep his word steadfastly. What begins as a childish rebellion graduates to a mature, considered act, with Cosimo gradually starting to accustom and then commit himself to a lifestyle in the trees.

Life in the trees can be interpreted as a game that Cosimo plays. When Cosimo and his brother were younger, they used to climb trees and treat it as a game:

> Ci arrampicavamo sugli alberi (questi primi giochi innocenti si caricano adesso nel mio ricordo come d'una luce d'iniziazione, di presagio; ma chi ci pensava, allora?) [...][71]

The narrator, Cosimo's brother, does not know at that time that his brother would spend the rest of his life in the trees. In retrospect, he perceives this act of game-playing as a rite of passage to which Cosimo is subject.[72] However, tree climbing is not the only game that Biagio recognises. He also realises that the unrelenting dispute between his father and brother is also a form of game: 'tutto mi pareva un gioco, la guerra di noi ragazzi contro i grandi era la solita di tutti i ragazzi [...]'.[73]

---

[70] Calvino, *Il barone rampante*, p. 559.
[71] Calvino, *Il barone rampante*, p. 553.
[72] See M. J. Ellis, *Why People Play* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1973), esp. Chapter 3, pp. 23-48. According to Ellis, one of the various purposes of game playing is to initiate children into their adult life, to prepare them for their future since play develops their communicative skills. He also lists other purposes of play, which include play as the release of surplus energy, as the recapitulation of the development history of the species, and as a form of relaxation.
[73] Calvino, *Il barone rampante*, p. 550.

A significant implication is that game playing does not only entail traditional games, such as tree climbing and hide-and-seek, but it is more pervasive and embraces a wider sphere of experience. The boundaries between life and play become blurred as the narrative progresses. For example, the aristocratic life that Cosimo's family is leading is seen as a game by the villagers who are not familiar with their noble rules. Thus, when they see Cosimo living in the trees, it does not take long for them to get used to his idiosyncratic lifestyle:

> Nei primi tempi i contadini, a vederlo varcare tali distanze tutto per i rami, non si raccapezzavano, non sapevano se salutarlo cavandosi il cappello come si fa coi signori o vociargli contro come a un monello. Poi ci presero l'abitudine e scambiavano con lui parole sui lavori, sul tempo, e mostravano pure d'apprezzare il suo gioco di star lassù, non più bello né più brutto di tanti altri giochi che vedevano fare ai signori.[74]

For the peasants, Cosimo's decision to live in the trees is no less a game than his family's aristocratic lifestyle. They are not only similar in the sense that their activities are extraordinary in the eyes of the villagers; both kinds of lifestyle are also framed by rigid ideals. If the baron's family needs to abide by certain moral codes and values, Cosimo needs to observe his primary ideal of never touching the ground. For the villagers, both kinds of lifestyle are similarly formed on the basis of a set of arbitrary rules.

In clinging to his idealism, Cosimo has rigid self-discipline. He is determined to be in the trees and refuses to come down, like a player in a game who in order to play it well needs to adhere to the rules. His decision is a rebellious act against

---

[74] Calvino, *Il barone rampante*, p. 614.

his father and his aristocratic ideals. When the baron approaches his son and asks him to come down and assume his privileged status, Cosimo refuses:

> — Vi invito a venire a terra, — disse il Barone, con voce pacata, quasi spenta,
> — e a riprendere i doveri del vostro stato.
> — Non intendo obbedirvi, signor padre, — fece Cosimo, — me ne duole.[75]

The baron's firm belief in his ideals only intensifies Cosimo's belief in his own, even though it may mean that, to accomplish his vow never to touch the earth, Cosimo needs to refuse all luxuries that his aristocratic lifestyle offers, a temptation that only a few can resist.[76] The commitment to his arbitrary and apparently absurd vow is analogous to an initiation into a game that forgoes any return.[77] The more Cosimo is absorbed into the game, the more unlikely he is to abandon it. In addition, since for him the accomplishment of the vow is one of his ideals, the inability to keep his word would mean that his honour would unavoidably be compromised.

For some critics, Cosimo's decision to live in the trees is seen as a form of liberation from an oppressive situation, which in this case is his family background. John Gatt-Rutter, for example, considers Cosimo's choice to be an escape from the concept of social class that divides the noble and the poor:

> by taking to the trees, he finds that, far from cutting himself off from people, for the first time in his life he can mix freely and on equal terms with people of all

---

[75] Calvino, *Il barone rampante*, p. 609.
[76] To a certain extent, Biagio is a foil to Cosimo in this respect. Biagio never refuses to obey his father and subsequently takes up the responsibility of the barony and its accoutrements.
[77] One of the baron's remarks to Cosimo carries a significant, if not prophetic, message: 'L'avvertì il padre e si fece più stringente: — La ribellione non si misura a metri, — disse. — Anche quando pare di poche spanne, un viaggio può restare senza ritorno' (Calvino, *Il cavaliere inesistente*, p. 609).

> social classes, including charcoal-burners and robbers. He can even talk to the neighbouring noble family instead of feuding with them as before.[78]

The fact that, in his attempt to explore the world, Cosimo is able to cross various terrains is juxtaposed with the isolation that his family impose upon themselves by choosing to stay only on their own estate. By climbing trees, Cosimo learns to recognise the existence of other social classes as well as a sense of humanity common to all.[79] Nonetheless, Cosimo's decision to stay in the trees can also be seen as being caught in a game: the rules of the game compel him to remain there, for if he comes down, he will be considered 'a loser'. A conversation between Cosimo and Viola, the female character with whom the protagonist is later to fall in love, reflects this situation:

> — No, io non scendo nel tuo giardino e nemmeno nel mio. Per me è tutto territorio nemico ugualmente. [...]
>
> — [...] Lascia che ti spieghi come stanno le cose. [Viola disse, —] Tu hai la signoria degli alberi, va bene?, ma se tocchi una volta terra con un piede, perdi tutto il tuo regno e resti l'ultimo degli schiavi. Hai capito? Anche se ti si spezza un ramo e caschi, tutto perduto!
>
> — Io non sono mai caduto da un albero in vita mia!
>
> — Certo, ma se caschi, se caschi diventi cenere e il vento ti porta via.[80]

---

[78] John Gatt-Rutter, 'Calvino Ludens: Literary Play and its Political Implications', *Journal of European Studies*, 5 (1975), 319-340 (p. 329); see also his 'Calvino's Macrocosm: The Politics of Play', in his *Writers and Politics in Modern Italy* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1978), pp. 46-51.

[79] This conclusion is also shared by Woodhouse, who argues that 'Cosimo, particularly as a boy, reveals the ingenuous lack of inhibition which allows his varied occupations and his natural environment, to cut across the pompous facade of convention and the more fatuous aspects of human behaviour' (Woodhouse, *Italo Calvino*, p. 70).

[80] Calvino, *Il barone rampante*, pp. 567-68.

Viola understands how Cosimo's vow imprisons, rather than liberates him. The rules that Cosimo creates for himself are, to her, arbitrary and imaginary. This is reflected in her sarcastic response that, should he fail to accomplish his vow, he would turn into ash and the wind would carry him away. Paradoxically, if Cosimo thinks that climbing a tree and staying there for the rest of his life means that he is able to escape from his rigid family ideals, he needs to think again. This is because he becomes bound by another set of ideals, no less rigid and arbitrary. The absurdity of the whole situation reaches its climax, when Cosimo refuses even to die on the ground but clings to a rope tied to a balloon and lets himself fall into the sea.[81]

'Los teólogos': Games, Vanity, and Religion

The absurdity of Cosimo's choice offers a parodic picture of an individual who clings to ideals, regardless of changing circumstances or criticism. He is not the only example of this type, for Abbé Fauchelefleur, the mentor of the two brothers, is also an obsessive. However, what distinguishes the Abbé from Cosimo is that while Cosimo believes in the ideals that he creates for himself, the Abbé is loyal to ideals that have been passed down from generation to generation. His faith in his religious sect and in freedom leads to his persecution and imprisonment. However, he becomes another example of someone who strongly believes in his own form of ideals:

---

[81] A sense of awkwardness can already be felt in the scene when Cosimo is dying and people need to hoist a bed and other accessories into the tree where he is residing: 'Issammo un letto sull'albero, riuscimmo a sistemarlo in equilibrio; lui si coricò volentieri. Ci prese un po' il rimorso di non averci pensato prima: a dire il vero lui le comodità non le rifiutava mica: pur che fosse sugli alberi, aveva sempre cercato di vivere meglio che poteva. Allora ci affrettammo a dargli altri conforti: delle stuoie per ripararlo dall'aria, un baldacchino, un braciere' (Calvino, *Il barone rampante*, p. 774).

> L'Abate passò il resto dei suoi giorni tra carcere e convento in continui atti d'abiura, finché non morì, senza aver capito, dopo una vita intera dedicata alla fede, in che cosa mai credesse, ma cercando di credervi fermamente fino all'ultimo.[82]

Abbé Fauchelefleur's dedication to his own faith is similar to Cosimo's in the sense that neither of them quite grasp what their ideals are.[83] Calvino himself states that religion is for him a kind of game, thereby implying the arbitrary aspect of religious idealism:

> For me religion is just a stimulating intellectual game. Hindu mythology, Olympian mythology, or the King James version of the Holy Bible are all at the same part of my library.[84]

Borges also touches upon this aspect of religious idealism. In 'Los teólogos',[85] Borges charts a history of the animosity between two theologians, Aureliano, coadjutor of Aquilea, and Juan de Panonia. Sharing the same orthodox beliefs, they often compete in trying to refute new heretic sects in order to gain favour from religious leaders of higher ranks. One day, Aureliano discovers the emergence of a new sect, the 'Monótonos', which believes in the eternal return of

---

[82] Calvino, *Il barone rampante*, p. 653.

[83] In Cosimo's case, this is clearly seen in one of his dialogues with his brother Biagio, in which he shows his belief in his ideal, even though he does not quite know what it is he is fighting for:

> — Io non sono mai sceso! — disse mio fratello.
> — Sei stato nel giardino dei D'Ondariva?
> — Sì, ma sempre da un albero all'altro, senza mai toccar terra!
> — Perché? — chiesi io; era la prima volta che lo sentivo enunciare quella sua regola, ma ne aveva parlato come d'una cosa già convenuta tra noi, quasi tenesse a rassicurarmi di non avervi trasgredito; tanto che io non osai più insistere nella mia richiesta di spiegazioni (Calvino, *Il barone rampante*, pp. 571-72).

[84] Ian Thomson, 'In the Heat of the Moment: A Conversation in Rome with Italo Calvino', *London Magazine*, new series, 24: 9-10 (1984-1985), 54-68 (p. 66).

[85] Borges, 'Los teólogos', in his *Obras completas 1923-1972*, pp. 550-56 (first publ. 1949).

history,[86] and he also learns that Juan is preparing to refute the heresy. Aureliano then tries to refute it before his arch-enemy. However, it transpires that Juan finishes his treatise first and the Council of Pergamo decides to entrust Juan with officially refuting the errors of the 'Monótonos', much to the chagrin of Aureliano.

Subsequently, there emerges another heretic sect, called the 'Histriones,' which believes that the world will finish when all possibilities are exhausted. In other words, they do not believe in the concept of eternal return that the 'Monótonos' hold dear. They believe that there can be no repetitions in human history and the world is gradually heading towards its demise.[87] Aureliano and Juan once again set out to refute the heretic doctrine. Unintentionally, Aureliano remembers certain sentences that sum up the doctrine of the 'Histriones' and discovers that Juan once used these sentences to refute the doctrine of the 'Monótonos', whose ideals are diametrically opposite to those of the 'Histriones'. Even though Aureliano disguises Juan's words in a subtle, oblique manner in his treatise, the authorities manage to discover that these heretic sentences belong to Juan's treatise, *Adversus annulares*. When Juan is summoned to the court to defend himself, he does not deny the traces of the 'Histriones' doctrine in his treatise:

> En lugar de tratar de purificarse de la más leve mácula de histrionismo, se esforzó en demostrar que la proposición de que lo acusaban era rigurosamente ortodoxa. Discutió con los hombres de cuyo fallo dependía su suerte y cometió

---

[86] In Borges's words, 'la novísima secta de los *monótonos* (llamados también *anulares*) profesaba que la historia es un círculo y que nada es que no haya sido y que no será' (Borges, 'Los teólogos', p. 550. His italics). Borges is interested in the doctrine of eternal return; one of his essays, 'La doctrina de los ciclos', singularly focuses on this topic. See Borges, 'La doctrina de los ciclos', in his *Obras completas 1923-1972*, pp. 385-92 (first publ. 1936).

[87] 'Otros histriones discurrieron que el mundo concluiría cuando se agotara la cifra de sus posibilidades; ya que no puede haber repeticiones, el justo debe eliminar (cometer) los actos más infames, para que estos no manchen el porvenir y para acelerar el advenimiento del reino de Jesú s' (Borges, 'Los teólogos', p. 553).

> la máxima torpeza de hacerlo con ingenio y con ironía. El veintiséis de octubre, al cabo de una discusión que duró tres días y tres noches, lo sentenciaron a morir en la hoguera.[88]

Like Abbé Fauchelefleur, Juan stands firm on what he believes and challenges the authorities to revise their position. He even argues against them with ingenuity and sarcasm since he deplores the changing circumstances that unwittingly alter the validity of his ideals. Like Cosimo and the Abbé, Juan commits himself fully to his own ideals even though this eventually costs him his life.

On the other hand, holding fast to his orthodox beliefs, Aureliano continues serving his religion and eventually dies in a fire. While he is in a hut of a monastery in Hibernia, a lightning bolt sets the trees around it ablaze and Aureliano is trapped in the hut and burned. It should be noted here that both Juan and Aureliano face similar ends, with fire engulfing them while they are entrapped in a confined space. This similarity also leads to the final scene in which God is the final judge:

> Más correcto es decir que en el paraíso, Aureliano supo que para la insondable divinidad, él y Juan de Panonia (el ortodoxo y el hereje, el aborrecedor y el aborrecido, el acusador y la víctima) formaban una sola persona.[89]

If Aureliano and Juan are but a single person in the eyes of God, it means that the ideals that both Aureliano and Juan hold are neither valid nor extant in heaven. Ideals, for Borges, are nothing but human constructs that humans try to maintain in order to make sense of the world. In heaven, the ideals that both Aureliano and

---

[88] Borges, 'Los teólogos', p. 555.
[89] Borges, 'Los teólogos', p. 556.

Juan maintain and the fight that both of them rigorously execute turn out to be futile. Their ideals are nothing but different sets of codes, neither of which is absolute. Like Cosimo, the baron, and the Abbé, both theologians are also prisoners of their own ideals. Like chivalric values and moral codes, aristocratic and religious ideals are viewed as arbitrary, created out of the void. Pursuing this line of thought, it can be argued that both Borges and Calvino challenge a hierarchy of representational systems: as values and ideals that constitute these systems are regarded as arbitrary, it may be unreasonable to judge that one system is better than others.

Godgames, Labyrinths, and Representational Limits

In 'Los teólogos', God appears at the end to settle the dispute between Aureliano and Juan by revealing that both of them are but different facets of a single person. Both theologians can be compared to the chess pieces that are controlled by God in Borges's 'Ajedrez': they do not know that they are but actors playing parts that have been predestined by God. Their entrapment precludes them from realising a broader picture, to which they are only a partial contribution. This element of cognitive entrapment in face of an omnipotent entity can also be seen in *Il barone rampante*. Like Aureliano and Juan, Cosimo and his father adhere to different sets of rules and both of them hold on so steadfastly that they refuse to give in to each other by following their opponent's ideals. When his father asks him to come down, Cosimo is at a loss for words and can only give an absurd reason:

> Invece s'era annoiato a star lì a fare il solenne; cacciò fuori la lingua e gridò: — Ma io dagli alberi piscio più lontano! — frase senza molto senso, ma che troncava netto la questione.

> [...] si voltò [il Barone di Rondò], trasse un braccio dal mantello e indicando il cielo che s'era rapidamente caricato di nubi nere, esclamò: — Attento, figlio, c'è Chi può pisciare su tutti noi! — e spronò via.[90]

While the presence of God is implied in 'Los teólogos' at the end of the story when He announces that both Aureliano and Juan are a single person, who happens to adhere to two different sets of game rules, in *Il barone rampante* His presence is also implicit in the scene above whereby the baron warns his son that what he is doing is nothing but playing a game, but a 'wrong' kind of game that can easily cost Cosimo dearly. In the eyes of God, both the baron and Cosimo are not different: they are prisoners of their own kinds of games. Similarly they are victims entrapped in their own imagined beliefs.

These similar situations in both stories can be labelled 'godgames', a term coined by John Fowles to designate a specific situation in which:

> a *magister ludi* knows the rules (because he has invented them) and the character-player does not. A godgame occurs in literature when one or more characters creates an illusion, a mazelike sequence of false accounts, that entraps other characters. The entrapped character becomes entangled in the threads of (from his point of view) an incomprehensible strategy plotted by another character who displays the roles of both a gamewright and a god.[91]

A godgame has both of the main defining characteristics of a game: its separate territory and a distinctive set of rules that determine the action of players.[92]

---

[90] Calvino, *Il barone rampante*, pp. 609-10.
[91] R. Rawdon Wilson, *In Palamedes' Shadow: Explorations in Play, Game, & Narrative Theory* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1990), pp. 123-24. His italics.
[92] Wilson further defines his concept of godgame by listing seven main characteristics. See his *In Palamedes' Shadow*, p. 128.

However, what distinguishes a godgame from other kinds of game is the fact that its players may not realise they are part of a game, abiding by a set of rules posited by another character who understands the whole situation. According to Fowles, this limited knowledge is crucial to a godgame:

> We are in the best possible situation because everywhere, below the surface, we do not know; we shall never know why; we shall never know tomorrow; we shall never know a god or if there is a god; we shall never even know ourselves. This mysterious wall round our world and our perception of it is not there to frustrate us but to train us back to the now, to life, to our time being.[93]

If a player in Fowles's godgame can be regarded as a prisoner wandering in a labyrinth, not knowing where the exit is or how long the journey will be, most of the characters from the narratives analysed above (Cosimo, the baron, Aureliano, and Juan) can then be viewed as mere players in a godgame. They struggle to learn the rules of the game they are playing, yet at most they only realise their *own* rules. Unlike Brodie in 'El informe de Brodie', who begins to realise the existence of other game rules to the extent that he adopts an alternative set of values,[94] these characters are still entrapped in their own rules, too narrow-minded to learn any others.

Following this line, the narratives of Borges and Calvino are also similar in one significant respect: if there is a God who supervises this godgame in their narratives, His presence is no longer positive: instead of shedding light upon the

---

[93] Fowles, *The Aristos* (London: Pan, 1968; first publ. 1965), p. 22.

[94] Towards the end of 'El informe de Brodie', when Brodie leaves the community of the Yahoos to live with another missionary, Father Fernandes, he needs to spend sometime readjusting himself since he has lived with the Yahoos long enough that their values have influenced him a great deal: 'Al principio me causaba algún asco verlo abrir la boca sin disimulo y echar adentro piezas de comida. Yo me tapaba con la mano o desviaba los ojos; a los pocos días me acostumbré ' (Borges, 'El informe de Brodie', p. 1078).

destiny of mankind, God in their narratives is both unknowing and uncaring. In 'Los teólogos,' for example, God mistakes Aureliano for Juan and shows little interest in their religious differences:

> Tal vez cabría decir que Aureliano conversó con Dios y que Éste se interesa tan poco en diferencias religiosas que lo tomó por Juan de Panonia. Ello, sin embargo, insinuaría una confusión de la mente divina.[95]

Aureliano is disappointed when realising that God is not interested in his religious belief. The ideals that he has been fighting for turn out to be simply a set of arbitrary rules in God's eyes. Borges also explores a variation of this theme in 'Las ruinas circulares',[96] in which he relates the life of a magician who heads to a circular enclosure, in fact the site of an old, ruined temple, with the motive to create a son by using his own imaginative power. Once he is able to conjure up his son, the magician is worried that his creature will realise that he is an oneiric product of another man, not born out of a process of natural procreation. The magician remembers God's words that fire can distinguish the imagined man:

> El mago recordó bruscamente las palabras del dios. Recordó que de todas las criaturas que componen el orbe, el fuego era la única que sabía que su hijo era un fantasma. Ese recuerdo, apaciguador al principio, acabó por atormentarlo. Temió que su hijo meditara en ese privilegio anormal y descubriera de algún modo su condición de mero simulacro. No ser un hombre, ser la proyección del sueño de otro hombre ¡qué humillación incomparable, qué vertigo![97]

---

[95] Borges, 'Los teólogos', p. 556.
[96] Borges, 'Las ruinas circulares', in his *Obras completas 1923-1972*, pp. 451-55 (first publ. 1941).
[97] Borges, 'Las ruinas circulares', p. 454.

However, this remembrance of God's words brings the magician an ironic epiphany: when the magician decides to end his life by throwing himself into the fire, he realises that he is not burnt: 'Éstos no mordieron su carne, éstos lo acariciaron y lo inundaron sin calor y sin combustión'.[98] He then recognises that he is also a product of another man's dream, an appearance with no real essence: 'Con alivio, con humillación, con terror, comprendió que él también era una apariencia, que otro estaba soñándolo'.[99] Like Juan and Aureliano, the magician does not realise until the end that he has been a mere player in a godgame, an unreal creature conjured up by someone else's dreams and imagination. Like 'Los teólogos', God in 'Las ruinas circulares' appears to feel unperturbed in face of this revelation. In fact, it seems like there is no longer God, who supervises this chaotic world of unreal creatures, as it is clear from the beginning of the story that divine entities are no longer worshipped at the ruins: 'Ese redondel es un templo que devoraron los incendios antiguos, que la selva palúdica ha profanado y cuyo dios no recibe honor de los hombres'.[100]

If God in Borges's 'Los teólogos' and 'Las ruinas circulares' is uncaring and it does not matter whether He controls the universe, or lets it run in its course, Calvino, by contrast, stresses this negative aspect by downplaying the role of God. In Calvino's narrative the figure of godhead metamorphoses into the structure of the game, i.e. the inexplicable existence of rules that human beings need in order to exist.[101] Interestingly, the disappearance of God in Calvino's narrative corresponds with the increasing emphasis upon the concept of a gaping void at the heart of human existence. In other words, since there is no God to which the caprice of human fate can be attributed, Calvino's narrative exposes

---

[98] Borges, 'Las ruinas circulares', p. 455.
[99] Borges, 'Las ruinas circulares', p. 455.
[100] Borges, 'Las ruinas circulares', p. 451.
[101] Wilson also uses this point to characterise modern godgames, in which 'the observing god shrinks, withdraws, and becomes absorbed into the texture of the game itself' (Wilson, *In Palamedes' Shadow*, p. 132).

the reader to the meaningless void, in which all beliefs and faiths are analogous to different sets of game rules, all of which are equally valid.

Such disappearance of the figure of God in Calvino's narrative, however, leads to one distinctive difference between the two authors. If Borges, especially in 'Los teólogos', stresses the void and futility of human ideals as they only amount to petty discrepancies in the eyes of God, Calvino argues that, despite their fruitlessness, human ideals are indispensable, especially now that God appears to take little or no interest in human action. Agilulfo, for instance, realises the void that surrounds and threatens his action, epitomised in his corporeal non-existence; however, he continues to carry out his knightly duties with unswayed faith in holy cause since his faith and his 'playing to the rules' give meaning to his existence. Bradamante, a female knight whose decision to embrace a life of chivalry is attributed to 'l'amore che portava verso tutto ciò che era severo, esatto, rigoroso, conforme a una regola morale e — nel maneggio delle armi e dei cavalli — a un'estrema precisione di movenze',[102] recognises in Agilulfo certain meaning that other knights lack. When Agilulfo leaves the camp in order to prove his knighthood, Bradamante does not hesitate to follow him, telling her retinue to get ready:

> — Preparatemi tutto, parto, parto, non resto qui un minuto di più, lui se n'è andato, l'unico per cui questa armata aveva un senso, l'unico che poteva dare un senso alla mia vita e alla mia guerra, e adesso non resta altro che un'accozzaglia di beoni e violenti me compresa, e la vita è un rotolarsi tra letti e bare, e lui solo ne sapeva la geometria segreta, l'ordine, la regola per capirne il principio e la fine![103]

---

[102] Calvino, *Il cavaliere inesistente*, p. 1001.
[103] Calvino, *Il cavaliere inesistente*, pp. 1019-20.

No wonder Agilulfo's strict observance of chivalric codes amazes Bradamante and eventually makes her fall in love with him. This is not only because of Bradamante's similar affection for precision and exactness, it can also be construed that the fact that Agilulfo holds steadfastly to what he believes and, in a sense, becomes an objectification of what she holds dear enchants her. The non-existent knight, ironically, sets an example for Bradamante of what ideal existence should be like, no matter how impractical this can be.

Likewise, Cosimo in *Il barone rampante* clings to his ideals until his death. Even though he does not quite understand why he needs to stay in the trees, his strict commitment to his ideals gives his and other people's lives 'meaning'. Before Cosimo dies, Biagio recognises the importance of the life his brother is leading:

> [...] seguo le gazzette, leggo i libri, mi ci rompo la testa, ma le cose che voleva dire lui [Cosimo] non sono lì, è altro che lui intendeva, qualcosa che abbracciasse tutto, e non poteva dirla con parole ma solo vivendo come visse. Solo essendo così spietatamente se stesso come fu fino alla morte, poteva dare qualcosa a tutti gli uomini.[104]

For Biagio, even though Cosimo's choice is preposterous, an act that forces the protagonist to flee from one kind of imprisonment to another, his adherence to his ideals is an example to follow. Without ideals, life loses its meaning; hence, the only way to give some sense to life is to follow these ideals that one creates for oneself.

The difference in the authors' attitudes can be linked to the disparity in the general atmosphere of their narratives. The sense of helplessness and despair

---

[104] Calvino, *Il barone rampante*, p. 773.

pervades Borges's texts. In 'Ajedrez', for example, his chess game is no longer a recreational activity since it connotes a sense of human incapacity to know their own destiny. The black and white colour of the chessboard and chess pieces has a sinister ring as it signifies the conflictual nature. This in turn engenders the stressful, grave atmosphere: 'El tablero/ Los demora hasta el alba en su severo/ Ámbito en que se odian dos colores'.[105] In the same way, both 'Las ruinas circulares' and 'Los teólogos' are also set in a bleak atmosphere. While the former is set in a ruined temple forsaken by God, the latter begins with the portrayal of the destructive effect of religious intolerance:

> Arrasado el jardín, profanados los cálices y las aras, entraron a caballo los hunos en la biblioteca monástica y rompieron los libros incomprehensibles y los vituperaron y los quemaron, acaso temerosos de que las letras encubrieran blasfemias contra su dios, que era una cimitarra de hierro.[106]

This sense of violent destruction by the Huns prefigures the calamitous fortunes of both Aureliano and Juan, whose learned world of religious orthodoxy is seen as oppressive and complicated. Aureliano himself admits that, in general, novelty is not permissible or even seen as subversive in the realm of theology:

> Sabía [Aureliano] que en materia teológica no hay novedad sin riesgo; luego reflexionó que la tesis de un tiempo circular era demasiado disímil, demasiado asombrosa, para que el riesgo fuera grave. (Las herejías que debemos temer son las que pueden confundirse con la ortodoxia.)[107]

---

[105] Borges, 'Ajedrez', p. 813.
[106] Borges, 'Los teólogos', p. 550.
[107] Borges, 'Los teólogos', p. 550.

For Aureliano, if the world of theology is a game, it is one in which he needs to make his move carefully since the borderlines between heresy and orthodoxy are not clear-cut. The seriousness of his game can be seen by a punishment one may receive if one loses the game. In this case, Juan is burnt because he is believed to be heretic. For Borges, his godgame is grave and the implication of losing the game may involve death.

Death also looms large in Calvino's narrative: Agilulfo in *Il cavaliere inesistente* vanishes at the end of the story and Cosimo in *Il barone rampante* dies of old age, clinging to his decision of not touching the ground by choosing to throw himself into the sea. Nevertheless, while Borges's 'Los teólogos' ends pessimistically with both of the theologians dead, appearing in heaven in face of indifferent God, the two narratives of Calvino end with hope, with the lives of both Agilulfo and Cosimo giving meaning to those remaining alive. The atmosphere of these texts is also less sombre and more celebratory. When Agilulfo vanishes, it turns out that Bradamante disguises herself as a nun writing the text of *Il cavaliere inesistente*. The ending sees Bradamante leave the abbey and unite with Rambaldo. If Borges's theologians are regarded as being imprisoned in their oppressive realm of religious orthodoxy, the case of Bradamante can be seen as an emancipation from such a realm. *Il cavaliere inesistente* ends with two lovers reunited, looking towards the future, rather than the past:

> Dal raccontare al passato, e dal presente che mi prendeva la mano nei tratti concitati, ecco, o futuro, sono salita in sella al tuo cavallo. Quali nuovi stendardi mi levi incontro dai pennoni delle torri di città non ancora fondate? quali fumi di devastazioni dai castelli e dai giardini che amavo? quali impreviste età

> dell'oro prepari, tu malpadroneggiato, tu foriero di tesori pagati a caro prezzo, tu mio regno da conquistare, futuro...[108]

Even though Agilulfo vanishes because his ideals are viewed as too constraining, his adherence to these chivalric ideals gives an example of how life should be led. In *Il barone rampante*, a sense of optimism also prevails. Even though Cosimo perishes at the end of the narrative, leaving Biagio behind to recount his adventures to later generations, the ending sees the honoured life of Cosimo forever kept, not in the spirit of younger people as in *Il cavaliere inesistente*, but in the text itself:

> Quel frastaglio di rami e foglie, biforcazioni, lobi, spiumii, minuto e senza fine, e il cielo solo a sprazzi irregolari e ritagli, forse c'era solo perché ci passasse mio fratello col suo leggero passo di codibugnolo, era un ricamo fatto sul nulla che assomiglia a questo filo d'inchiostro, come l'ho lasciato correre per pagine e pagine, zeppo di cancellature, di rimandi, di sgorbi nervosi, di macchie, di lacune, che a momenti si sgrana in grossi acini chiari, a momenti si infittisce in segni minuscoli come semi puntiformi, ora si ritorce su se stesso, ora si biforca, ora collega grumi di frasi con contorni di foglie o di nuvole, e poi s'intoppa, e poi ripiglia a attorcigliarsi, e corre e corre e si sdipana e avvolge un ultimo grappolo insensato di parole idee sogni ed è finito.[109]

The density of the forest, where Cosimo dwells, becomes associated with the ink which the narrator uses in relating the adventures. This can be interpreted as the survival of Cosimo, not in the real world, but in the textual world, ready to be conjured up again and relived in the reader's imagination. If Cosimo's life should be honoured because it teaches us about the mechanisms of nature and the human

---

[108] Calvino, *Il cavaliere inesistente*, p. 1064.
[109] Calvino, *Il barone rampante*, pp. 776-77.

condition, textuality offers a channel through which his life and dream can be revived. It can thus be argued that, unlike Borges's 'Ajedrez' and 'Los teólogos', Calvino's narrative testifies to his optimism and hope, despite the dark, imprisoning nature of the human condition.

In brief, the use of game playing to shed light upon the human condition is double-edged: not only can it remind human beings that entrapment is a basic human condition, it can also intensify feelings of imprisonment. This is why Rambaldo in *Il cavaliere inesistente* breaks down and cries when he learns the game-like status of life and the central nullity at the core of human existence to which such knowledge leads. It is why Aureliano in Borges's 'Los teólogos' experiences unexpected surprise upon learning that Juan and he are but a single person and the beliefs that he has jealously guarded and carefully scrutinised are simply nothing in the eyes of God. It is also why the magician in 'Las ruinas circulares' feels both humiliated and terrorised after realising that, like his son, he is also ironically a creature imagined by someone else, a player who does not know that he is part of a game. Perhaps the recognition that life is only a game is forbidden knowledge that, for both Borges and Calvino, human beings are not supposed to know, as it directly shows how banal human entrapment is and how limited and immuring the human condition can be. Nevertheless, even though they agree on such a sombre picture of the human condition, Borges and Calvino have different attitudes towards it: while the former plays upon the futility of the ideals and values for which human beings fight, the latter stresses our need to adhere to them, as without them life would be meaningless. To Calvino, our strict adherence to these values, no matter how impractical it can be, can be used as an antidote to the recognition of the existential void at the heart of our human life.

In this respect, the concept of game, particularly the godgame, offers an interesting way in which representation and the human condition can be regarded.

If human beings are locked up in their own systems of representation, the concept of game playing makes them realise that their ideals or moral codes are imbued with both conscious and unconscious forms of prejudices, ranging from language to conceptual tools, in the same way that players are governed by binding, arbitrary rules. Aureliano and Juan provide a good example of how moral standpoints are shaped and framed by personal prejudices, including the desire to gain triumph over the other. The concept of life as a game, especially the godgame, also casts light on human incapacity to get out of their games and draw a picture of the whole situation. Players are like wanderers astray in a labyrinth, which, in this respect, represents the human condition, constraining human attempts to understand the real in its original complexity. Human beings are reduced to mere players in a game, unaware that they are only a part of the picture but hoping that they can understand the mechanisms of the universe. In addition, game playing makes mankind realise that there are also other systems of representation extant, those that can be equally used to comprehend the real. This is exemplified by Brodie's acknowledgement of the Yahoos' lifestyle, as well as by Cosimo's father's eventual acceptance of his son's unique way of life. In this aspect, it can be argued that the narratives of both Borges and Calvino urge a revision of our notion of representation, viewing a representational practice not as a monolithic way in which, if enough scrutinised and properly developed, the whole mechanisms of the universe can be revealed, but only as one possible alternative out of many, in which different partial aspects of the multifarious universe can be comprehended.

Conclusion

By juxtaposing the works of Borges and Calvino, the thesis has demonstrated how representing the human condition becomes an issue at the heart of their narratives and how they respond to this philosophical theme in various ways. In this light, it has discussed how their narratives can be regarded as attempts to analyse how individuals fathom the universe and how they and their complex landscapes are related. Human limits are highlighted as both authors suggest that man cannot see the universe in all its entirety, but perceive it through a myriad of representational practices. Representation, therefore, is deemed a highly complex phenomenon which opens up problematic issues of language and knowledge-production. In this regard, language and human cognitive processes are also considered to be intricate: instead of reflecting external reality, they are partly constructed and influenced by human subjectivity. While language affects the creation of meaning via the mediation of textualisation, cognitive processes become patterns which similarly influence the production of knowledge, through which external reality is filtered and is liable to forms of manipulation and distortion. These lead Borges and Calvino to perceive that the human condition involves recognition of unavoidable intrusion into representational practices, resulting in the individual being both subject and object of representation.

The thesis has also discussed the implications and consequences of the human condition, as the mediations of language and cognition become part of the reason why reality and representation are driven apart, resulting in the futility of any search for absolutes. As a result, ultimate truth cannot exist and in its stead are a variety of truth-claims, whose validity depends upon situations wherein they are generated. The disappearance of absolutes leaves nothing for human beings to hold onto, but a recognition that what they perceive as real (such as science, history, and religion) are human constructs. This leads to an alienating awareness

that human subjects are locked up in their own self-constructed representational systems and it is questionable whether they can escape from these self-conceptualised labyrinths. For Borges and Calvino, each representational system can be compared to a game, whose rules resemble truth-claims that human subjects hold dear in each system. This also implies that human subjects are bound by their own arbitrary rules and trapped in their own games. Their incapacity to look outside their own systems enhances the sense of entrapment to which they are subjected.

In this respect, the thesis has analysed how their works can be regarded as meditative explorations of the crisis of representation which plagues the contemporary mind. These implications of the human condition, as portrayed by Borges and Calvino, are underpinned by the unbridgeable gap between representation and what it refers to, a conflictual relationship that characterises Derrida's and Foucault's modern epoch, in which meaning cannot be derived from representational material referring directly to transcendental reality, but is considered to be partially constructed by the process of representation. This is in line with Lyotard's theory of representation, which also helps shed light on how the two authors deal with the unpresentable and the complex, problematic relationship between the self and the world, as their narratives '[puts] forward the unpresentable in presentation itself'.[1]

As the thesis aims to investigate not only their similarities but also their differences, the adoption of these theorists' ideas of representation, nevertheless, may deflate the discrepancies between the two authors. In discussing what for him is the infernal human condition, Calvino is on the lookout for escape. In 'La sfida al labirinto',[2] in which his notion of the labyrinth points towards the human

---

[1] Lyotard, 'Answering the Question: What Is Postmodernism?', p. 81.
[2] Calvino, 'La sfida al labirinto', in his *Saggi 1945-1985*, i, 105-23 (first publ. 1962).

incapacity to represent reality when the real in its original complexity transcends human understanding, Calvino analyses these two attitudes in relation to the motif of labyrinth:

> Da una parte c'è l'attitudine oggi necessaria per affrontare la complessità del reale, rifiutandosi alle visioni semplicistiche che non fanno che confermare le nostre abitudini di rappresentazione del mondo; quello che oggi ci serve è la mappa del labirinto la più particolareggiata possibile. Dall'altra parte c'è il fascino del labirinto in quanto tale, del perdersi nel labirinto, del rappresentare questa assenza di vie d'uscita come la vera condizione dell'uomo.[3]

On the one hand, the author can draw a map of the world, one that is as detailed as possible so that there can be as little simplification as possible. On the other, the author has to be so engrossed in this labyrinth of complexity that he or she considers the absence of an exit to be a true, natural condition of human beings. However, Calvino subscribes to neither of these attitudes. The role of literature, for him, is to define a better attitude, to find an exit from the labyrinth, even if the exit is nothing but another passage to another labyrinth:

> Quel che la letteratura può fare è definire l'atteggiamento migliore per trovare la via d'uscita, anche se questa via d'uscita non sarà altro che il passaggio da un labirinto all'altro. È la *sfida al labirinto* che vogliamo salvare, è una letteratura della *sfida al labirinto* che vogliamo enucleare e distinguere dalla letteratura della *resa al labirinto*.[4]

'Sfida' is the keyword here, as Calvino believes that literature should challenge the labyrinth in the same way that wanderers in the labyrinth need to confront its

---

[3] Calvino, 'La sfida al labirinto', p. 122.
[4] Calvino, 'La sfida al labirinto', p. 122. His italics.

complex architecture, endeavouring to find an egress, as in the case of Dantés and Abbé Faria in 'Il conte di Monte Cristo'.

While Calvino is engaged in finding an exit from the labyrinth, Borges appears to be mesmerised in the maze of multiplicity and argues that the absence of egresses from it constitutes the main trait of the human condition. His exitless labyrinths include the library in 'La biblioteca de Babel' and the desert in 'Los dos reyes y los dos laberintos', in which he plays upon the ordeals the protagonists have to undergo as they lose their ways and become estranged. According to Gerald Graff:

> The critical power of absence remains intact, giving Borges a perspective of judging the unreality of the present. His work affirms the sense of reality in a negative way by dramatising its absence as a deprivation.[5]

For Graff, the power of Borges's narrative lies in such a negative way to judge the sense and absence of reality, as also seen in 'El Aleph' and 'El libro de arena', where Borges explores and deplores the complexity of the universe and, at the same time, human incapacity to comprehend it. The protagonists of both stories lament their own impotence in the face of the universe's complexity. The narrator of 'El Aleph' experiences unspeakable sorrow after seeing the magical Aleph, whereas the narrator of 'El libro de arena' tries to forget the existence of the monstrous book. At least in these two stories Borges suggests no alternative or way out of the labyrinth but implies that such inadequacy is unavoidable.

In this regard, Borges's personal attitude towards the complexity of the real can be regarded as pessimistic, especially when one judges from the endings of such

---

[5] Gerald Graff, *Literature against Itself: Literary Ideas in Modern Society* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 56.

stories as 'Funes, el memorioso' and 'La muerte y la brújula'. While the eponymous hero of the former dies through pulmonary congestion, probably a negative symbol of overwhelming reality, the latter dies after learning that his use of reason proves to be his own undoing. These losses mean that in Borges's universe, those who realise the unrepresentability of the real cannot survive, or at best can no longer lead a normal life and bear the burden of such awareness, like the protagonist of 'El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan', who feels endless contrition, or like Craigie in 'Tigres azules', who is destined to feel terrorised for the rest of his life. Calvino's characters, by contrast, are not subject to suffering on such a grand scale as Borges's; they are at worst irritated. Paraggi in 'L'avventura di un fotografo', for example, goes on taking photographs even though he realises that, no matter how hard he endeavours, he will never be able to capture the absolute real. However, the awareness does not lead to vertigo or despair as in Borges's cases. In the same way, upon recognising that the crystals are not made up of orderly elements alone, Qfwfq in 'I cristalli' is a little annoyed but comparatively nonchalant.

In addition, the tone that the two authors use in approaching the problematic issue of representation is also perceivably different. While Borges's tone is sombre and bleak, as with the case of 'Los teólogos', in which the two theologians need to refute each other's religious treatises and end up being burnt to death in different circumstances, the tone that Calvino adopts is more playful and light-hearted, as with the case of *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore*. Despite his wrongdoings, Marana does not end up being captured and imprisoned. Porphyritch lets him off scot-free, as if to make light of his crime and to signal that, unlike Borges's theologians, textual manipulation is not a matter of life and death. The tone that Calvino uses when he narrates the novel is a more relaxed and joyful one. *Palomar* is also a series of stories that testify to Calvino's use of comical tone as the eponymous protagonist is portrayed as a funny yet

persistently inquisitive individual who never gives up searching for the meaning of the universe, even though his philosophical quests sometimes engross him too much, thereby reducing him to a comical figure. In 'Il museo dei formaggi', for example, after contemplating chesses and their representative quality, Palomar is urged by a shopkeeper to make his purchase and he only buys those simple ones available because he forgets to think what he should have.

These differences in tone and attitude between Borges and Calvino are based on their positions regarding the human condition. While Borges highlights its negative side, i.e. human incapacity and the loss of absolutes, Calvino chooses to take a step further. For him, what Borges sets out to explore is accepted as a truistic premise and what really matters is how to live with it. In other words, Calvino tries to redefine the human condition as he is well aware that the human subject cannot avoid this disconsolate state. This difference can be seen clearly in the analogy between representation and entrapment. If Borges suggests that human beings cannot be liberated from the prison of their own representational systems (as with the case of the student in 'El etnógrafo' who cannot reveal the secret to his professor), Calvino also realises that but chooses to emphasise human beings' need to cling onto their systems of representation despite being aware of the constraints in their systems. Cosimo and Agilulfo may die or disappear at the end of *Il barone rampante* and *Il cavaliere inesistente* respectively; nonetheless, their deaths become valuable lessons for those remaining alive. Unlike the death of Borges's characters which connotes mainly a sense of despair and disillusionment, that of Cosimo and Agilulfo can be considered a positive act, as it signals to the rest of their accompanying characters that strict adherence to one's own ideals makes one's life valuable and meaningful, thereby making entrapment more bearable.

To an extent, these distinctions can be explained in an historical context, as Borges and Calvino are writers of different generations and thus the formation of their world-views is distinctive. Borges wrote a great number of his enigmatic short stories in the 1930s and the 1940s, whereas Calvino's main publications, such as *Le città invisibili*, *Il castello dei destini incrociati*, and *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore*, appeared in the 1960s and the 1970s. The sensibilities and spirits behind these times are perceivably different. It can be argued that, even though Borges is hailed as the originator of postmodern literature,[6] his predominant spirit is a modernist one. His image of the universe is a bleak one, where uncertainty and doubt reign supreme. Borges's world-view can be related to a dark, nihilistic branch of modernist literature, in which one recognises what Malcolm Bradbury perceives as 'the modernist abyss and its images of cultural disaster, its wasteland visions, its modes of mock-epic and antimyth, the fabulous discourse of the century'.[7]

Calvino's narrative, on the other hand, should be regarded as being written in a different kind of sensibility since his main works were published in the latter half of the twentieth century. For Bradbury, the 1950s was a decade that saw the gradual emergence of a new mood, with the appearances of the Theatre of the Absurd and the French *nouveau roman*. According to him:

> Provisionality and elusive registration became paramount qualities; anarchism and revolutionary subjectivism replaced concepts of ordered form or mythic coherence.[8]

---

[6] 'It can be argued that postmodernism is the first literary code that originated in America and influenced European literature, with the possibility that the writer who contributed more than anyone else to the invention and acceptance of the new code is Jorge Luis Borges, active as a writer of fiction since the 1930s' (Douwe W. Fokkema, *Literary History, Modernism, and Postmodernism* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1984), p. 38).

[7] Malcolm Bradbury, 'Modernisms/Postmodernisms', in *Innovation/Renovation*, ed. by Ihab Hassan and Sally Hassan (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), pp. 311-27 (p. 320).

[8] Bradbury, 'Modernisms/Postmodernisms', p. 321.

While Bradbury's new mood signals a dismissal of order or coherence in favour of a more relaxed attitude towards the contingent universe, Sontag's version of 'the new sensibility' aims at securing hedonistic pleasure:

> [A] way of characterising the present cultural situation, in its most creative aspects, would be to speak of a new attitude toward pleasure. [...] The seriousness of modern art precludes pleasure in the familiar sense — the pleasure of a melody that one can hum after leaving the concert hall, of characters in a novel or play whom one can recognise, identify with, and dissect in terms of realistic psychological motives, of a beautiful landscape or a dramatic moment represented on a canvas.[9]

In her attempt to gauge the prevailing sensibility of the 1960s, Sontag's analysis signals a shift in perspective. If modernist literature is regarded as solemn, Sontag's new sensibility aims to restore the joy and pleasure of reading. In a sense, both Bradbury and Sontag willy-nilly contribute to the shaping of postmodern literature as they endeavour to define the more relaxing spirit and sensibility of the latter-half of the twentieth century, when dark portrayals of the modernist universe gave way to their more laissez-faire, perhaps even more positive counterparts.[10] Calvino's narrative can be related to these lines of postmodern literature since he accepts this anarchical, chaotic world of modernism as a *donnée* and sets out to explore any possibilities to make it more inhabitable. Calvino does not challenge the abysmal portrayal of the modernist universe; nevertheless, he retains his emotional optimism, seeking to find an angle from which he can make the universe bearable. In this aspect, Calvino's

---

[9] Sontag, 'One Culture and the New Sensibility', in her *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1967), pp. 293-304 (p. 302) (first publ. 1965).
[10] The transition from modernism to postmodernism has been a subject of debate. See Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, pp. 37-56.

stance can thus be labelled postmodern, especially if one follows Wilde's modern/postmodern categorisation. For Wilde, what he terms the postmodern sensibility is based upon the ideas that:

> The modernist nostalgia over origins is replaced by a dismissal of them; the frustration of being unable to resolve a dilemma gives way to an acceptance of the impossibility of making any sense whatever of the world as a whole. Acceptance is the key word here.[11]

For Wilde, while the modernist sensibility centres around nostalgia for the absence of ultimate meaning, for the universe where all absolutes cannot be ascertained, the postmodern sensibility is defined by an ironic sense of acceptance of such a universe, fully aware of human inadequacies to fathom it. It can thus be argued that, while Borges's narrative tends to display modernist sensibility by focusing on the sense of loss and nostalgia, Calvino's narrative elicits the latter as his works represent challenging attempts to find a proper perspective from which such a dark universe can be viewed in positive terms. His recognition of the human condition is characterised by what Wilde calls 'postmodern irony':

> Postmodern irony [...] is suspensive: an indecision about the meanings or relations of things is matched by a willingness to live with uncertainty, to tolerate and, in some cases, to welcome a world seen as random and multiple, even, at times, absurd.[12]

In other words, Calvino's view of the universe is no less bleak than Borges's; nevertheless, he is more willing than Borges to accept its complex existence,

---

[11] Wilde, *Horizons of Assent*, p. 44.
[12] Wilde, *Horizons of Assent*, p. 44.

albeit in an ironic way, as he is well aware of the limits of a human subject to investigate it. Wilde's distinction between modernism and postmodernism can be used to differentiate the two authors' nuanced attitudes towards the human condition. Placed in relation to their engagements with the unpresentable and with the limits of human perception of the real, Wilde's view enables us to differentiate the ways in which both authors treat these issues.

Notwithstanding, this distinction does not carry a suggestion that Borges's narrative is devoid of irony and concentrates solely on highlighting the sense of pessimism, loss, and despair. Borges's use of irony is mainly to portray discrepancies between vanity and understanding, between arrogant pride and disillusioning recognition of limited human capacity, thus making his work a bleak kind of comedy, in which an overconfident protagonist's hope of deciphering the universe, meeting with the complexity of the universe, reduces him or her to a fool figure (as in the cases of 'La biblioteca de Babel', 'Los teólogos', and 'Tigres azules'). Neither does this distinction imply that Calvino's work is better than Borges's because he takes a step further than Borges in his varied attempts to find a solution to the human condition or at least to make it more bearable. By yoking their narratives together, this thesis has demonstrated rather how the power in their narratives simply lies in different aspects: while Borges's narrative is distinctive in his portrayals of the anguish and despair the narrators or protagonists of his poems and stories feel towards the elusiveness of the real when they realise their own inadequacies, Calvino's narrative power lies in elements of defiance and hope, in his constant, if not persistent, search for a better perspective from which to view the human condition.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Borges, Jorge Luis, *Inquisiciones* (Barcelona: Biblioteca Breve, 1994; first publ. 1925)

Borges, Jorge Luis, *El tamaño de mi esperanza* (Buenos Aires: Proa, 1926)

Borges, Jorge Luis, 'An Autobiographical Essay', in *The Aleph and Other Stories 1933-1969*, trans. by Norman Thomas di Giovanni (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1970), 203-260

Borges, Jorge Luis, 'Up from Ultraism', *New York Review of Books*, 13 August 1970, 3-4

Borges, Jorge Luis, 'Foreword', in *Selected Poems 1923-1967*, ed. by Norman Thomas di Giovanni (London: Allen Lane, 1972), xiii-xiv

Borges, Jorge Luis, *Obras completas 1923-1972* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1974)

Borges, Jorge Luis, *El libro de arena* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1975)

Borges, Jorge Luis, *Borges, oral* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1979)

Borges, Jorge Luis, 'Simply a Man of Letters', in *Simply a Man of Letters*, ed. by Carlos Cortinez (Orono, Maine: University of Maine at Orono Press, 1982), 1-24

Borges, Jorge Luis, *Seven Nights*, trans. by Eliot Weinberger (New York: New Directions, 1984)

Borges, Jorge Luis, *La rosa de Paracelso. Tigres azules* (Madrid: Swan, 1986; first publ. 1978)

Borges, Jorge Luis, 'Borges on Borges', in *In Memory of Borges*, ed. by Norman Thomas di Giovanni (London: Constable, 1988), 37-51

Borges, Jorge Luis, *Textos recobrados 1919-1929* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1997)

Borges, Jorge Luis, *This Craft of Verse*, ed. by Calin-Andrei Mihailescu (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London: Harvard University Press, 2000)

Calvino, Italo, *Romanzi e racconti*, ed. by Claudio Milanini, Mario Barenghi and Bruno Falcetto, 3 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 1994)

Calvino, Italo, *Saggi*, ed. by Mario Barenghi, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 1995)

Secondary Sources

Adams, Robert Martin, 'The Intricate Argentine', *Hudson Review*, 19 (1966), 139-46

Adler, Sara Maria, *Calvino: The Writer as Fablemaker* (Madrid: J. Porrúa Turanzas, 1979)

Adler, Sara Maria, 'Calvino the Portraitist: Some Reflections and Deformations', *Forum Italicum*, 20 (1986), 28-43

Agheana, Ion T., *The Prose of Jorge Luis Borges: Existentialism and the Dynamics of Surprise* (New York: P. Lang, 1984)

Aguilar, Jesús, 'Can Pierre Menard be the Author of *Don Quixote*?', *Variaciones Borges*, 8 (1999), 166-77

Aínsa, Fernando, 'Los sueños de Borges y Calvino revisitados por Marco Polo', *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos*, 553-4 (1996), 105-19

Aínsa, Fernando, '*Las ciudades invisibles* de Italo Calvino. ¿Utopía visionaria o crónica de la memoria del futuro?', in *Borges, Calvino, la literatura*, ed. by Alain Sicard and Fernando Moreno, 2 vols (Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos, 1996), ii, 61-83

Aizenberg, Edna, *The Aleph Weaver: Biblical, Kabbalistic and Judaic elements in Borges* (Potomac, Md.: Scripta Humanistica, 1984)

Aizenberg, Edna, ed., *Borges and his Successors: The Borgesian Impact on Literature and the Arts* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1990)

Aizenberg, Edna, 'Borges and the Hebraism of Contemporary Literary Theory', in *Borges and his Successors: The Borgesian Impact on Literature and the Arts*,

ed. by Edna Aizenberg (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1990), 249-62
Aizenberg, Edna, 'Postmodern or Post-Auschwitz: Borges and the Limits of Representation', *Variaciones Borges*, 3 (1997), 141-52
Alazraki, Jaime, ed., *Jorge Luis Borges* (Madrid: Taurus, 1976)
Alazraki, Jaime, 'Tlön y Asterion: metáforas epistemológicas', in *Jorge Luis Borges*, ed. by Jaime Alazraki (Madrid: Taurus, 1976), 183-200
Alazraki, Jaime, 'Estructura oximorónica en los ensayos de Borges', in *Jorge Luis Borges*, ed. by Jaime Alazraki (Madrid: Taurus, 1976), 258-64
Alazraki, Jaime, *Versiones. Inversiones. Reversiones. El espejo como modelo estructural del relato en los cuentos de Borges* (Madrid: Grados, 1977)
Alazraki, Jaime, 'Borges o el difícil oficio de la intimidad: reflexiones sobre su poesía más reciente', *Revista Iberoamericana*, 100-101 (1977), 449-63
Alazraki, Jaime, *La prosa narrativa de Jorge Luis Borges: temas - estilo* (Madrid: Gredos, 1983)
Alazraki, Jaime, *Critical Essays on Jorge Luis Borges* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1987)
Alazraki, Jaime, *Borges and the Kabbalah and Other Essays on his Fiction and Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988)
Alazraki, Jaime, 'Borges's Modernism and the New Critical Idiom', in *Borges and his Successors: The Borgesian Impact on Literature and the Arts*, ed. by Edna Aizenberg (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1990), 99-108
Alba, Narciso, 'Vuelo y levedad en Italo Calvino: escritura y acción', in *Borges, Calvino, la literatura*, ed. by Alain Sicard and Fernando Moreno, 2 vols (Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos, 1996), ii, 9-20
Albero, Danilo, 'Borges y la industria cultural', in *Borges en 10 miradas*, ed. by Osvaldo Ferrari and others (Buenos Aires: Fundación El Libro, 1999), 21-34
Aldridge, A. Owen, ed., *Comparative Literature: Matter and Method* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1964)
Alifano, Roberto, *El humor de Borges* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones de la Urraca, 1996)
Almansi, Guido, 'Il mondo binario di Italo Calvino', *Paragone*, 22 (1971), 95-110
Almeida, Ivan, 'Borges, o los laberintos de la immanencia', in *Borges: desesperaciones aparentes y consuelos secretos*, ed. by Rafael Olea Franco (Mexico: El Colegio de México, 1999), 35-59
Almeida, Ivan, 'Borges en clave de Spinoza', *Variaciones Borges*, 9 (2000), 163-76
Almond, Ian, 'Tlön, Pilgrimages and Postmodern Banality', *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 2 (1998), 229-35
Alter, Robert, *Partial Magic: The Novel as a Self-Conscious Genre* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1975)
Alter, Robert, 'Mimesis and the Motive for Fiction', *TriQuarterly*, 42 (1978), 228-49
Altieri, Charles, 'The Hermeneutics of Literary Indeterminacy: A Dissent from the New Orthodoxy', *New Literary History*, 10 (1978-79), 71-99
Alvarez, Carlos Cabrera, *Tiempo y literatura* (Buenos Aires: Instituto Amigos del Libro Argentino, 1971)
Amoroso, Giuseppe, *Narrativa italiana 1984-1988* (Milan: Mursia, 1989)
Anderson, Perry, *The Origins of Postmodernity* (London and New York: Verso, 1998)
Anderson, Wilda, 'Encyclopedic Topologies', *Modern Language Notes*, 101 (1986), 912-28
Anderson Imbert, Enrique, 'Un cuento de Borges: 'La casa de Asterion'', in *Jorge Luis Borges*, ed. by Jaime Alazraki (Madrid: Taurus, 1976), 135-43
Anderson Imbert, Enrique, *El realismo mágico y otros ensayos*, 2nd edn (Caracas: Monte Avila, 1992)
Andrew, Richard, 'Italo Calvino', in *Writers & Society in Contemporary Italy*, ed. by Michael Caesar and Peter Hainsworth (Leamington Spa: Berg, 1984), 259-81

Antonello, Pier Paolo, 'Paesaggi della mente. Su Italo Calvino', *Forum Italicum*, 32 (1998), 108-31

Apter, T. E., *Fantasy Literature: An Approach to Reality* (London: Macmillan, 1982)

Arana, Juan, 'El panteísmo de Borges', *Variaciones Borges*, 6 (1998), 171-88

Argyros, Alex, 'Narrative and Chaos', *New Literary History*, 23 (1992), 659-73

Armani, Horacio, 'Evolución de la poesía borgeana', *Boletín de la Academia Argentina de Letras*, 241-242 (1996), 281-90

Ascari, Maurizio, ed., *Two Centuries of Detective Fiction: A New Comparative Approach* (Bologna: University of Bologna, 2000)

Ashbery, John, 'A Game with Shifting Mirrors', in *Critical Essays on Jorge Luis Borges*, ed. by Jaime Alazraki (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1987), 93-96

Atlan, Henri, 'On a Formal Definition of Organization', *Journal of Theoretical Biology*, 45 (1974), 295-304

Auden, W. H., 'The Guilty Vicarage', in his *The Dyer's Hand* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), 146-58

Axelos, Kostas, 'Planetary Interlude', trans. by Sally Hess, *Yale French Studies*, 41 (1968), 6-18

Axelos, Kostas, 'The Set's Game-Play of Sets', trans. by Beverly Livingston, *Yale French Studies*, 58 (1979), 95-101

Babich, Babette E., Debra B. Bergoffen, and Simon V. Glynn, eds, *Continental and Postmodern Perspectives in the Philosophy of Science* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1995)

Bachelard, Gaston, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. by Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969; first publ. 1958)

Baker, Stephen, *The Fiction of Postmodernity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000)

Balderston, Daniel, *El precursor velado: R. L. Stevenson en la obra de Borges* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1985)

Balderston, Daniel, *Out of Context: Historical Reference and the Representation of Reality in Borges* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993)

Balderston, Daniel, 'The 'Fecal Dialectic': Homosexual Panic and the Origin of Writing in Borges', in *¿Entiendes?: Queer Readings, Hispanic Writings*, ed. by Emilie L. Bergmann and Paul Julian Smith (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 29-45

Balderston, Daniel, ''Beatriz Viterbo c'est moi': Angular vision in Estela Canto's *Borges a contraluz*', *Variaciones Borges*, 1 (1996), 133-39

Balderston, Daniel, 'Borges: The Argentine Writer and the 'Western' Tradition', in *Borges and Europe Revisited*, ed. by Evelyn Fishburn (London: Institute of Latin American Studies, University of London, 1998), 37-48

Balderston, Daniel, 'Borges, ensayista', in *El siglo de Borges: retrospectiva – presente – futuro*, ed. by Alfonso de Toro and Fernando de Toro (Frankfurt: Vervuert, 1999), 565-77

Barbaro, Patrizio, and Fabio Pierangeli, *Italo Calvino: biografia per immagini* (Turin: Gribaudo, 1995)

Barilli, Renato, *La barriera del naturalismo*, 2nd edn (Milan: Mursia, 1970; first publ. 1964)

Barnatan, Marcos Ricardo, *Borges* (Madrid: EPESA, 1972)

Barnstone, Willis, *Borges at Eighty: Conversations* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982)

Baron, Christine, 'Utopie et ironie chez Borges et Calvino', in *Borges, Calvino, la literatura*, ed. by Alain Sicard and Fernando Moreno, 2 vols (Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos, 1996), ii, 99-111

Baroni, Giorgio, *Italo Calvino: introduzione e guida allo studio dell'opera Calviniana: storia e antologia della critica* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1988)

Barrenechea, Ana María, *Borges the Labyrinth Maker*, ed. and trans. by Robert Lima (New York: New York University Press, 1965)

Barrenechea, Ana María, *La expresión de la irrealidad en la obra de Borges* (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 1967)

Barrenechea, Ana María, 'Borges y el idioma de los argentinos', in her *La expresión de la irrealidad en la obra de Borges* (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 1967), 205-29

Barrenechea, Ana María, 'Ensayo de una tipología de la literatura fantástica', *Revista Iberoamericana*, 80 (1972), 391-403

Barrenechea, Ana María, 'Borges y la narración que se autoanaliza', *Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica*, 2 (1975), 515-27

Barrenechea, Ana María, 'Borges and the Symbols', trans. by María Elena B. de Beretta, in *Simply a Man of Letters*, ed. by Carlos Cortinez (Orono, Maine: University of Maine at Orono Press, 1982), 37-47

Barrenechea, Ana María, 'On the Diverse (South American) Intonation of Some (Universal) Metaphors', trans. by Edna Aizenberg, in *Borges and his Successors: The Borgesian Impact on Literature and the Arts*, ed. by Edna Aizenberg (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1990), 17-25

Barrenechea, Ana María, 'Detalle y tono en la crítica borgesiana', *Variaciones Borges*, 3 (1997), 28-34

Barrenechea, Ana María, 'Borges: álgebra y fuego', in *El siglo de Borges: literatura – ciencia – filosofía*, ed. by Alfonso de Toro and Susanna Regazzoni (Frankfurt: Vervuert, 1999), 25-35

Barth, John, 'The Literature of Exhaustion', in *Postmodern Literary Theory: An Antholoy*, ed. by Niall Lucy (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 310-21 (first publ. in *The Atlantic*, 2 (1967), 29-34)

Barthes, Roland, 'Science versus Literature', in *Structuralism: A Reader*, ed. by Michael Lane (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970), 410-16 (first publ. in *The Times Literary Supplement*, 28 September 1967)

Barthes, Roland, *S/Z*, trans. by Richard Miller (London: Jonathan Cape, 1975)

Barthes, Roland, *Image, Music, Text*, trans. by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977)

Bassnett, Susan, *Comparative Literature: A Critical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993; repr. 1995)

Bassnett, Susan, 'The Meek or the Mighty: Reappraising the Role of the Translator', *Translation, Power, Subversion*, ed. by Román Álvarez and M. Carmen-África Vidal (Clevedon, Philadelphia, and Adelaide: Multilingual Matters, 1996), 10-24

Bastos, María Luisa, 'Literalidad y trasposición: 'las repercusiones incalculables de lo verbal'', *Revista Iberoamericana*, 100-101 (1977), 535-47

Baudelaire, Charles, *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Seuil, 1968)

Baudelaire, Charles, 'The Painter of Modern Life', in his *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, ed. and trans. by Jonathan Mayne (New York: Da Capo, 1986), 1-40

Bauman, Zygmunt, 'Desert Spectacular', in *The Flâneur*, ed. by Keith Tester (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 138-57

Bayard, Pierre, *Who Killed Roger Ackroyd? The Mystery Behind the Agatha Christie Mystery*, trans. by Carol Cosman (London: Fourth Estate, 2000)

Bazzocchi, Marco Antonio, *L'immaginazione mitologica: Leopardi e Calvino, Pascoli e Pasolini* (Bologna: Edizioni Pendragon, 1996)

Beaujour, Michel, 'The Game of Poetics', *Yale French Studies*, 41 (1968), 58-67

Beccaria, Gian Luigi, 'Calvino, il mestiere di scrivere', in *Italo Calvino: A Writer for the Next Millennium*, ed. by Giorgio Bertone (Alexandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 1998), 151-67

Beer, Gillian, 'Science and Literature', in *Companion to the History of Modern Science*, ed. by R. C. Olby and others (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 783-98

Bell, Michael, ed., *The Context of English Literature: 1900-1930* (London: Methuen, 1980)

Bell-Villada, Gene H., *Borges & his Fiction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981)

Belpoliti, Marco, ed., *Italo Calvino. Enciclopedia: arte, scienza e letterature* (Milan: Marcos & Marcos, 1995)

Belpoliti, Marco, *L'occhio di Calvino* (Turin: Einaudi, 1996)

Belpoliti, Marco, 'Calvino dopo Calvino: dai fantasmi cibernetici all'ipertesto narrativo', in *Italo Calvino: A Writer for the Next Millennium*, ed. by Giorgio Bertone (Alexandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 1998), 189-94

Belsey, Catherine, *Critical Practice* (London and New York: Routledge, 1980)

Bencivenga, Ermanno, 'Philosophy and Literature in Calvino's Tales', in *Literary Philosophers: Borges, Calvino, Eco*, ed. by Jorge J. E. Gracia, Carolyn Korsmeyer, and Rodolphe Gasché (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), 205-21

Benedetti, Mario, *Letras del continente mestizo*, 2nd edn (Montevideo: Arca, 1970)

Bénichou, Paul, 'Kublai Khan, Coleridge y Borges', *Sur*, 236 (1955), 57-61

Benjamin, Walter, *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. by Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: Verso, 1985)

Benjamin, Walter, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. by Harry Sohn (London and New York: Verso, 1997; first publ. 1969)

Benjamin, Walter, *Illuminations*, ed. by Hannah Adrendt, trans. by Harry Zohn (London: Pimlico, 1999; first publ. 1955)

Benjamin, Walter, *The Arcades Project*, trans. by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London: Belknap, 1999)

Benjamín, Alicia R., 'Borges y la voz del otro', in *Borges en 10 miradas*, ed. by Osvaldo Ferrari and others (Buenos Aires: Fundación El Libro, 1999), 35-45

Bennett, Maurice J., 'The Detective Fiction of Poe and Borges', *Comparative Literature*, 35 (1983), 266-75

Benussi, Cristina, *Introduzione a Calvino* (Rome: Laterza, 1989)

Bergoffen, Debra B., 'Coveting a Body of Knowledge: Science and the Desires of Truth', in *Continental and Postmodern Perspectives in the Philosophy of Science*, ed. by Babette E. Babich, Debra B. Bergoffen, and Simon V. Glynn (Aldershot: Avebury, 1995), 139-51

Berman, Marshall, *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York and London: Penguin, 1988)

Bernardini Napoletano, Francesca, *I segni nuovi di Italo Calvino. Da* Le Cosmicomiche *a* Le città invisibile (Rome: Bulzoni, 1977)

Berne, Eric, *Games People Play: The Psychology of Human Relationships* (London: Penguin, 1968; first publ. 1964)

Bernheimer, Charles, ed., *Comparative Literature in the Age of Multiculturalism* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995)

Bernstein, Jeremy, *Einstein* (London: Fontana, 1973)

Bertens, Hans, 'The Postmodern *Weltanschauung* and its Relation with Modernism: An Introductory Survey', in *Approaching Postmodernism*, ed. by Douwe W. Fokkema and Hans Bertens (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1986), 9-51

Bertens, Hans, *The Idea of the Postmodern: A History* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995)

Bertone, Giorgio, ed., *Italo Calvino: la letteratura, la scienza, la città* (Genoa: Marietti, 1988)

Bertone, Giorgio, *Italo Calvino: il castello della scrittura* (Turin: Einaudi, 1994)

Bertone, Giorgio, ed., *Italo Calvino: A Writer for the Next Millennium* (Alexandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 1998)

Bickel, Gisele, 'La alegoría del pensamiento', *Modern Language Notes*, 88 (1973), 295-316.

Bioy Casares, Adolfo, *La otra aventura* (Buenos Aires: Galerna, 1968)

Bioy Casares, Adolfo, 'El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan', in *Jorge Luis Borges*, ed. by Jaime Alazraki (Madrid: Taurus, 1976), 56-60

Bioy Casares, Adolfo, 'Books and Friendship', in *The Borges Tradition*, ed. and trans. by Norman Thomas di Giovanni (London: Constable, 1995), 111-21

Blanchot, Maurice, 'El infinito literario: *El Aleph*', trans. by Edith Jonsson, in *Jorge Luis Borges*, ed. by Jaime Alazraki (Madrid: Taurus, 1976), 211-14

Block de Behar, Lisa, *Al margen de Borges* (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno, 1987)

Block de Behar, Lisa, 'The Place of the Library', *Latin American Literary Review*, 58 (2001), 55-72

Bohórquez, Elba, 'La cuestión de lo teórico como fuente de lo literario en la obra de J. L. Borges', in *Borges, Calvino, la literatura*, ed. by Alain Sicard and Fernando Moreno, 2 vols (Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos, 1996), i, 181-92

Bonnefoy, Yves, 'Homage to Jorge Luis Borges', *New Literary History*, 21 (1989), 163-71

Bonsaver, Guido, 'Il Calvino 'semiotico': dalla crisi del romanzo naturalistico all'opera come macrotesto', *The Italianist*, 14 (1994), 160-94

Bonsaver, Guido, '*Il Menabó*, Calvino and the *avanguardie*: Some Observations on the Literary Debate of the Sixties', *Italian Studies*, 50 (1995), 86-96

Bonura, Giuseppe, *Invito alla lettura di Italo Calvino* (Milan: Mursia, 1972)

Borello, Rodolfo A., 'El evangelio según Borges', *Revista Iberoamericana*, 100-101 (1977), 503-16

Borello, Rodolfo A., 'Situación, prehistoria y fuentes medievales: 'El Aleph' de Borges', *Boletín de la Academia Argentina de Letras*, 223-24 (1992), 31-48

Borello, Rodolfo A., 'La prosa de Borges: desarrollo y etapas', *Boletín de la Academia Argentina de Letras*, 237-238 (1995), 245-61

Borroni, Pierangela, Adriano Ogliari, and Antonio Sparzani, 'Borges, Omero e Kublai Kan: la realtà dell'invisibile', in *Narratori dell'invisibile: simposio in memoria di Italo Calvino*, ed. by Beppe Cottafavi and Maurizio Magri (Modena: Mucchi, 1987), 45-49

Botta, Anna, 'Calvino and the Oulipo: An Italian Ghost in the Combinatory Machine?', *Modern Language Notes*, 112 (1997), 81-89

Bowie, Malcolm, 'Afterword: Borges and the Art of Allusion', in *Borges and Europe Revisited*, ed. by Evelyn Fishburn (London: Institute of Latin American Studies, University of London, 1998), 124-28

Braceli, Rodolfo E., *Don Borges, saque su cuchillo porque he venido a matarlo* (Buenos Aires: Galerna, 1979)

Bradbury, Malcolm, 'The Cities of Modernism', in *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature 1890-1930*, ed. by Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane (London: Penguin, 1991; first publ. 1976), 96-104

Bradbury, Malcolm, and James McFarlane, eds, *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature 1890-1930* (London: Penguin, 1991; first publ. 1976)

Bradbury, Malcolm, 'Modernisms/Postmodernisms', in *Innovation/Renovation*, ed. by Ihab Hassan and Sally Hassan (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 311-27

Bradbury, Malcolm, *The Modern World: Ten Great Writers* (London: Penguin, 1989; first publ. 1988)

Brand, Peter, and Lino Pertile, eds, *The Cambridge History of Italian Literature*, rev. edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999)

Bratosevich, Nicolas, 'El desplazamiento como metáfora en tres textos de Jorge Luis Borges', *Revista Iberoamericana*, 100-101 (1977), 549-60

Brett, R. L, *Fancy and Imagination* (London: Methuen, 1969)

Britzolakis, Christina, 'Phantasmagoria: Walter Benjamin and the Poetics of Urban Modernism', in *Ghosts: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, History*, ed. by Peter Buse and Andrew Stott (Hampshire and London: Macmillan, 1999), 72-91

Brodski, Bella, ''She was unable not to think': Borges' 'Emma Zunz' and the Female Subject', *Modern Language Notes*, 100 (1985), 330-47

Bronte, D. Lydia, 'The Humanities, Values, and the Future of Comparative Literature', *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature*, 29 (1980), 33-6

Brooker, Peter, ed., *Modernism/Postmodernism* (London and New York: Longman, 1992)

Brooks, David, 'Modernism', in *Encyclopedia of Literature and Criticism*, ed. by Martin Coyle and others (London: Routledge, 1990), 119-30

Brooks, Peter, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London: Harvard University Press, 1984)

Brooks, Peter, 'Aesthetics and Ideology: What Happened to Poetics?', *Critical Inquiry*, 20 (1994), 509-23

Bruner, Jerome S., Alison Jolly, and Kathy Sylva, eds, *Play – Its Role in Development and Evolution* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1976)

Bruner, Jerome, 'The Narrative Construction of Reality', *Critical Inquiry*, 18 (1991), 1-21

Bruscagli, Riccardo, 'Autobiografia (perplessa) di Italo Calvino', *Paragone*, 366 (1980), 82-87

Bruss, Elizabeth W., 'The Game of Literature and Some Literary Games', *New Literary History*, 9 (1977), 153-72

Bryce, Judith, 'Rousseau and Calvino: An Unexplored Ideological Perspective in *Il barone rampante*', in *Moving in Measure: Essays in Honour of Brian Moloney*, ed. by Judith Bryce and Doug Thompson (Hull: Hull University Press, 1989), 201-14

Buck, Günther, 'The Structure of Hermeneutic Experience and the Problem of Tradition', trans. by Peter Heath, *New Literary History*, 10 (1978-79), 31-47

Buck-Morss, Susan, 'The Flâneur, the Sandwichman and the Whore: The Politics of Loitering', *New German Critique*, 39 (1986), 99-140

Burgin, R., *Conversations with Jorge Luis Borges* (New York, Chicago and San Francisco: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1969)

Burke, Peter, ed., *Critical Essays on Michel Foucault* (Aldershot: Scolar, 1992)

Burns, Jennifer, 'Telling Tales about 'Impegno': Commitment and Hindsight in Vittorini and Calvino', *Modern Language Review*, 95 (2000), 992-1006

Byrne, Jack, 'Calvino's Fantastic 'Ancestors': The Viscount, the Baron and the Knight', *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 6.2 (1986), 42-53

Cabrera Infante, Guillermo, 'My Dinners with Borges', in *The Borges Tradition*, ed. by Norman Thomas di Giovanni (London: Constable, 1995), 15-34

Caiero, Oscar, 'Borges, por la huella de Kafka', *Criterio*, 1769 (1977), 416-21

Caillois, Roger, 'The Detective Novel as Game', trans. by William W. Stowe, in *The Poetics of Murder: Detective Fiction and Literary Theory*, ed. by Glenn W.

Most and William W. Stowe (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), 1-12 (first publ. 1941)

Caillois, Roger, *Man, Play and Games*, trans. by Meyer Barash (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001; first publ. 1958)

Caillois, Roger, 'Riddles and Images', trans. by Jeffrey Mehlman, *Yale French Studies*, 41 (1968), 148-58

Calinescu, Matei, 'Postmodernism and Some Paradoxes of Periodisation', in *Approaching Postmodernism*, ed. by Douwe W. Fokkema and Hans Bertens (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1986), 239-54

Calligaris, Contardo, *Italo Calvino* (Milan: Mursia, 1973)

Calvo Montoro, María J., 'Borges y Calvino 'falsarios'', in *Borges, Calvino, la literatura*, ed. by Alain Sicard and Fernando Moreno, 2 vols (Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos, 1996), ii, 299-309

Calvo Montoro, María J., 'Italo Calvino/Jorge Luis Borges: de la reflexión crítica al intertexto', *Cuadernos Americanos*, 64 (1997), 179-94

Canfield, Martha, 'Borges: del minotauro al signo laberíntico', in *El siglo de Borges: literatura – ciencia – filosofía*, ed. by Alfonso de Toro and Susanna Regazzoni (Frankfurt: Vervuert, 1999), 67-76

Canguilhem, George, 'The Death of Man, or Exhaustion of the Cogito?', in *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, ed. by Gary Gutting (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 71-91

Cannon, JoAnn, 'The Image of the City in the Novels of Italo Calvino', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 24 (1978), 83-90

Cannon, JoAnn, *Italo Calvino: Writer and Critic* (Ravenna: Longo, 1981)

Cannon, JoAnn, 'Calvino's Latest Challenge to the Labyrinth: A Reading of *Palomar*', *Italica*, 62 (1985), 189-200

Cannon, JoAnn, *Postmodern Italian Fiction: the Crisis of Reason in Calvino, Eco, Sciascia, Malerba* (Rutherford and London: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press and Associated University Press, 1989)

Cansinos Assens, Rafael, 'Jorge Luis Borges', in *Jorge Luis Borges*, ed. by Jaime Alazraki (Madrid: Taurus, 1976), 34-45

Canto, Estela, *Borges a contraluz* (Buenos Aires: Espasa, 1999)

Cantonnet, María Ester, *Hombre: tiempo y espacio en la narrativa de Pedro Leandro Ipuche y Jorge Luis Borges* (Montevideo: Ediciones de la Banda Oriental, 1984)

Cañeque, Carlos, ed., *Conversaciones sobre Borges* (Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1995)

Capano, Daniel A., 'Un paradigma transtextual: Borges-Eco o 'una rosa nacida de un laberinto'', in *Estudios de narratología*, ed. by Mignon Domínguez (Buenos Aires: Biblos, 1991), 42-64

Capozzi, Rocco, 'Intertextuality and the Proliferation of Signs/Knowledge in Eco's Super-Fictions', *Forum Italicum*, 32 (1998), 456-81

Cardona, Giorgio Raimondo, 'Fiaba, racconto e romanzo', in *Italo Calvino: Atti del convegno internazionale*, ed. by Giovanni Falaschi (Florence: Garzanti, 1988), 187-201

Carilla, Emilio, 'Borges: entre el ensayo y el cuento', *Alba de América*, 8-9 (1987), 73-88

Carlos Alberto, Erro, *Medida de criollismo* (Buenos Aires: Porter, 1929)

Carré, Jean-Marie, 'Une Preface à *La Littérature comparée*', *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature*, 1 (1952), 8-9 (first publ. 1951)

Carroll, Robert C., 'Borges and Bruno: The Geometry of Infinity in *La muerte e la brújula*', *Modern Language Notes*, 94 (1979), 321-42

Cartasso, Isabella, 'Il percorso circolare di Pin come 'iniziazione mancata'', *Forum Italicum*, 31 (1997), 63-73

Carter, Angela, 'Borges the Taxonomist', in *The Borges Tradition*, ed. by Norman Thomas di Giovanni (London: Constable, 1995), 35-47

Cascardi, Anthony J., 'Mimesis and Modernism: The Case of Jorge Luis Borges', in *Literary Philosophers: Borges, Calvino, Eco*, ed. by Jorge J. E. Gracia, Carolyn Korsmeyer, and Rodolphe Gasché (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), 109-27

Casso, Claudia, 'Relato e impulsión en *Las ciudades invisibles* de Italo Calvino', in *Borges, Calvino, la literatura*, ed. by Alain Sicard and Fernando Moreno, 2 vols (Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos, 1996), ii, 31-38

Castañón, Adolfo, 'Jorge Luis Borges e Italo Calvino: una idea de la literatura', in *Borges, Calvino, la literatura*, ed. by Alain Sicard and Fernando Moreno, 2 vols (Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos, 1996), i, 79-84

Castellano, Eduardo Guerra, 'Tiempo y espacio en la producción de Jorge Luis Borges', *Humanitas*, 18 (1977), 245-50

Castle, Terry, 'Phantasmagoria: Spectral Technology and the Metaphorics of Modern Reverie', *Critical Inquiry*, 15 (1988), 26-61

Castro Flórez, Fernando, 'Laberintos', *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos*, 505-507 (1992), 269-78

Caviglia, John, 'The Tales of Borges: Language and the Private Eye', *Modern Language Notes*, 89 (1974), 219-31

Cawelti, John G., *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1976)

Caws, Mary Ann, ed., *City Images: Perspectives from Literature, Philosophy, and Film* (New York, Philadelphia, and London: Gordon and Breach, 1991)

Cazzato, Luigi, 'Italo Calvino: la via cosmicomica alla letteratura', *Allegoria*, 31 (1999), 136-50

Cédola Veiga, Estela, 'Forma e significato nei racconti di Jorge Luis Borges', trans. by Alfonsina Ramagini Bacci, in *La pratica sociale del testo*, ed. by Carlo Bordoni (Bologna: CLUEB, 1985), 31-45

Cédola Veiga, Estela, *Borges o la coincidencia de los opuestos* (Buenos Aires: EUDEBA, 1987)

Cella, Susana Beatriz, 'Análogos. Conjeturas borgeanas sobre la alegoría y la metáfora', in *Borges, Calvino, la literatura*, ed. by Alain Sicard and Fernando Moreno, 2 vols (Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos, 1996), i, 193-204

Celli, Giorgio, 'La scienza vista dalla fiaba', in *Italo Calvino: la letteratura, la scienza, la città*, ed. by Giorgio Bertone (Genoa: Marietti, 1988), 79-81

Centofanti, Fabrizio, *Italo Calvino: una trascendenza mancata* (Milan: Istituto di propaganda libraria, 1993)

Chandler, Raymond, 'The Simple Art of Murder', in *The Simple Art of Murder* (New York: Vintage, 1988), 1-18

Chatman, Seymour, 'Towards a Theory of Narrative', *New Literary History*, 6 (1974-75), 295-318

Cheselka, Paul, *The Poetry and Poetics of Jorge Luis Borges* (New York: Peter Lang, 1987)

Chevrel, Yves, *Comparative Literary Today: Methods & Perspectives*, trans. by Farida Elizabeth Dahab (Kirksville, Missouri: The Thomas Jefferson University Press, 1995; first publ. 1989)

Childs, Peter, *Modernism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000)

Christ, Ronald J., *The Narrow Act: Borges' Art of Allusion* (New York and London: University of London Press, 1969)

Christ, Ronald, 'Forking Narratives', in *Simply a Man of Letters*, ed. by Carlos Cortinez (Orono, Maine: University of Maine at Orono Press, 1982), 75-88

Christensen, Peter G., 'Utopia and Alienation in Calvino's *Invisible Cities*', *Forum Italicum*, 20 (1986), 16-27
Christie, Agatha, *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (London: Harper Collins, 1993)
Clark, Hilary A., 'Encyclopedic Discourse', *SubStance*, 67 (1992), 95-110
Clerici, Luca, and Bruno Falcetto, eds, *Calvino & il comico* (Milan: Marcos & Marcos, 1994)
Cobley, Paul, *Narrative* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001)
Cohen, David, *The Development of Play*, 2nd edn (London and New York: Routledge, 1993; first publ. 1987)
Cohen, John Michael, *Jorge Luis Borges* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1973)
Coleman, Alexander, 'On the Concept of Romance in Borges', in *Simply a Man of Letters*, ed. by Carlos Cortinez (Orono, Maine: University of Maine at Orono Press, 1982), 89-97
Coleman, Alexander, 'The Playful Atoms of Jorge Luis Borges', in *Auctor Ludens: Essays on Play in Literature*, ed. by Gerald Guinness and Andrew Hurley (Philadelphia and Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1986), 75-90
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, *Poetical Works*, ed. by Ernest Hartley Coleridge (London: Oxford University Press, 1967; first publ. 1912)
Coletti, Vittorio, 'Calvino e l'italiano 'concreto' e 'preciso'', in *Italo Calvino: la letteratura, la scienza, la città*, ed. by Giorgio Bertone (Genoa: Marietti, 1988), 36-43
Collin, Françoise, 'The Third Tiger; or, From Blanchot to Borges', trans. by Christine de Lailhacar, in *Borges and his Successors: The Borgesian Impact on Literature and the Arts*, ed. by Edna Aizenberg (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1990), 80-95
Conte, Giuseppe, 'Il tappeto di Eudossia', in *Italo Calvino: la letteratura, la scienza, la città*, ed. by Giorgio Bertone (Genoa: Marietti, 1988), 44-49
Cordle, Daniel, *Postmodern Postures: Literature, Science and the Two Cultures Debate* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999)
Cottafavi, Beppe, and Magri, Maurizio, eds, *Narratori dell'invisibile: simposio in memoria di Italo Calvino* (Modena: Mucchi, 1987)
Cozarinsky, Edgardo, *Borges y el cine* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sur, 1974)
Crombie, A. C., 'Galileo's Conception of Scientific Truth', in *Literature and Science: Proceedings of the Sixth Triennial Congress* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1955), 132-38
Crovetto, Pier Luigi, 'Il castello dei destini che si biforcano (differenze e contiguità tra Jorge Luis Borges e Italo Calvino)', in *Italo Calvino: A Writer for the Next Millennium*, ed. by Giorgio Bertone (Alexandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 1998), 195-203
Culler, Jonathan, *Structuralist Poetics* (London: Routledge, 1989; first publ. 1975)
Cvitanovic, Dinko, 'Borges o los retos del canon', *Palabra y persona*, 6 (1999), 85-93
Da C. Andrade, E. N., *Isaac Newton* (London: Max Parrish, 1950)
D'Angeli, Concetta, 'Italo Calvino narratore e teorico della letteratura', *Paragone*, 51/52.544/546 (1995), 58-75
Daniel, Robert, 'Poe's Detective God', in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Poe's Tales*, ed. by William L. Howarth (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1971), 103-10
Danto, Arthur C., *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London: Harvard University Press, 1981)
Dapía, Silvia G., 'Why is There a Problem about Fictional Discourse? An Interpretation of Borges's 'Theme of the Traitor and the Hero' and 'Emma Zunz'', *Variaciones Borges*, 5 (1998), 157-76
Dauster, Frank, 'Notes on Borges' Labyrinth', *Hispanic Review*, 30 (1962), 142-48

De Caprio, Caterina, 'Calvino-Borges: la ripetizione dell'identico e la ripetizione del diverso', in *Borges, Calvino, la literatura*, ed. by Alain Sicard and Fernando Moreno, 2 vols (Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos, 1996), ii, 209-22

De Diego, José Luis, 'La teoría contemporánea a partir de Borges', *Orbis Tertius*, 1 (1996), 31-48

De Garayalde, Giovanna, *Jorge Luis Borges: Sources and Illuminations* (London: Octagon Press, 1978)

De la Fuente, José Luis, 'Las ciudades invisibles de Tlön', in *Borges, Calvino, la literatura*, ed. by Alain Sicard and Fernando Moreno, 2 vols (Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos, 1996), ii, 113-43

De Laihacar, Christine, 'The Mirror and the Encyclopedia: Borgesian Codes in Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*', in *Borges and his Successors: The Borgesian Impact on Literature and the Arts*, ed. by Edna Aizenberg (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1990), 155-79

De Lauretis, Teresa, 'Narrative Discourse in Calvino: Praxis or Poiesis?', *PMLA*, 90 (1975), 414-25

De Lauretis, Teresa, 'Calvino e la dialettica dei massimi sistemi', *Italica*, 53 (1976), 57-74

De Lauretis, Teresa, 'Semiotic Models, *Invisible Cities*', *Yale Italian Studies*, 2 (1978), 13-37

De Lauretis, Teresa, 'Calvino and the Amazons: Reading the (Post)Modern Text', in her *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction* (Hampshire and London: Macmillan, 1989), 70-83

De Lauretis, Teresa, 'Reading the (Post)Modern Text: *If on a winter's night a traveler*', in *Calvino Revisited*, ed. by Franco Ricci (Ottawa: Dovehouse, 1989), 131-45

De León-Jones, Karen, 'Language and Identity in Calvino's *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno*', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 33 (1997), 360-68

De Man, Paul, 'Un maestro moderno: Jorge Luis Borges', trans. by Aida Fajardo and Nilita Vientós Gastón, in *Jorge Luis Borges*, ed. by Jaime Alazraki (Madrid: Taurus, 1976), 144-51

De Man, Paul, 'A Modern Master', in *Critical Essays on Jorge Luis Borges*, ed. by Jaime Alazraki (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1987), 55-62

De Mara, Nicholas, 'Pathway to Calvino: Fantasy and Reality in *Il sentiero*', *Italian Quarterly*, 55 (1971), 25-49

De Quincey, Thomas, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (London: Walter Scott, 1886)

De Saussure, Ferdinand, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. by W. Baskin (Glasgow: Fontana, 1974)

De Toro, Alfonso, 'Postmodernidad y latinoamerica (con un modelo para la narrativa postmoderna)', *Revista Iberoamericana*, 155-156 (1991), 441-67

De Toro, Alfonso, and Fernando de Toro, eds, *Jorge Luis Borges: pensamiento y saber en el siglo XX* (Frankfurt: Vervuert, 1999)

De Toro, Alfonso, and Fernando de Toro, eds, *El siglo de Borges: retrospectiva – presente – futuro* (Frankfurt: Vervuert, 1999)

De Toro, Alfonso, and Susanna Regazzoni, eds, *El siglo de Borges: literatura – ciencia – filosofía* (Frankfurt: Vervuert, 1999)

De Toro, Alfonso, '¿Paradoja o rizoma? 'Transversalidad' y 'escriptibilidad' en el discurso borgeano', in *El siglo de Borges: retrospectiva – presente – futuro*, ed. by Alfonso de Toro and Fernando de Toro (Frankfurt: Vervuert, 1999), 173-208

De Toro, Alfonso, 'Cervantes, Borges y Foucault: La realidad como viaje a través de los signos', in *El siglo de Borges: literatura – ciencia – filosofía*, ed. by Alfonso de Toro and Susanna Regazzoni (Frankfurt: Vervuert, 1999), 45-65

De Toro, Fernando, 'Borges/Derrida y la escritura', in *Jorge Luis Borges: pensamiento y saber en el siglo XX*, ed. by Alfonso de Toro and Fernando de Toro (Frankfurt: Vervuert, 1999), 125-163

De Torre, Guillermo, 'Para la prehistoria ultraísta de Borges', in *Expliquémonos a Borges como poeta*, ed. by Ángel Flores (Mexico: Siglo XXI, 1984), 27-42

Del Carmen Marengo, María, 'El autor ficticio en la obra de Jorge Luis Borges: crítica y renovación de la literatura argentina', *Variaciones Borges*, 10 (2000), 167-83

Deleuze, Gilles, *Foucault*, trans. by Seán Hand (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988; first publ. 1986)

Dematteis, Giuseppe, 'La superficie e l'altrove. Dal Marco Polo di Italo Calvino al linguaggio delle cose nella geografia d'oggi', in *Italo Calvino: la letteratura, la scienza, la città*, ed. by Giorgio Bertone (Genoa: Marietti, 1988), 94-100

Dematteis, Giuseppe, 'La geografia alle soglie del terzo millennio: una mappa del labirinto?', in *Italo Calvino: A Writer for the Next Millennium*, ed. by Giorgio Bertone (Alexandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 1998), 289-300

Dentith, Simon, *Parody* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000)

Derrida, Jacques, *Of Grammatology*, trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976; first publ. 1967)

Derrida, Jacques, *Writing and Difference*, trans. by Alan Bass (London: Routledge, 1978)

Derrida, Jacques, 'Sending: On Representation', trans. by Peter and Mary Ann Caws, *Social Research*, 49 (1982), 294-326

Di Giovanni, Norman Thomas, Daniel Halpern, Daniel and Frank MacShane, eds, *Borges on Writing* (London: Allen Lane, 1974)

Di Giovanni, Norman Thomas, ed., *In Memory of Borges* (London: Constable, 1988)

Di Giovanni, Norman Thomas, 'In Memory of Borges: Introduction', in *In Memory of Borges*, ed. by Norman Thomas di Giovanni (London: Constable, 1988), 13-36

Di Giovanni, Norman Thomas, ed., *The Borges Tradition* (London: Constable, 1995)

Di Giovanni, Norman Thomas, 'One Mind at Work: Translating Borges with Borges', *The Times Literary Supplement*, 11 June 1999, 14-15

Dilthey, Wilhelm, 'The Rise of Hermeneutics', trans. by Fredric Jameson, *New Literary History*, 3 (1971-72), 229-44

Dini, Andrea, 'Calvino al Premio Riccione 1947', *Paragone*, 44.524-6 (1993), 33-59

Dini, Manuela, *Calvino critico: i percorsi letterari, gli scritti critici, le scelte di poetica* (Ancona: Transeuropa, 1999)

Dombroski, Robert S., *Properties of Writing: Ideological Discourse in Modern Italian Writing* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994)

Donato, Eugenio, 'Topographies of Memory', in *Simply a Man of Letters*, ed. by Carlos Cortinez (Orono, Maine: University of Maine at Orono Press, 1982), 99-114

Dossena, Giampaolo, 'Sillabarii, lipogrammi e rime per l'occhio', in *Italo Calvino: la letteratura, la scienza, la città*, ed. by Giorgio Bertone (Genoa: Marietti, 1988), 70-75

Dove, Patrick, 'Visages of the Other: On a Phantasmatic Recurrence in Borges's 'El sur'', *Latin American Literary Review*, 56 (2000), 61-88

Drake, Stillman, 'Galileo's Language: Mathematics and Poetry in a New Science', *Yale French Studies*, 49 (1973), 13-27

Duchesne Winter, Juan, 'Después de la pérdida de la justicia: Una lectura zizekiana de 'Emma Zunz'', *Variaciones Borges*, 10 (2000), 185-202

Dunham, Lowell, and Ivar Ivask, *The Cardinal Points of Borges* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971)

During, Simon, *Foucault and Literature: Towards a Genealogy of Writing* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992)

Earnshaw, Steven, *The Direction of Literary Theory* (Hampshire and London: Macmillan, 1996)
Echavarría Ferrari, Arturo, ''Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius': Creación de un lenguaje y crítica del lenguaje', *Revista Iberoamericana*, 100-101 (1977), 399-413
Echavarría Ferrari, Arturo, *Lengua y literatura de Borges* (Barcelona: Ariel, 1983)
Echavarría Ferrari, Arturo, 'Espacio textual y el arte de la jardinería china en Borges: 'El jardín de los senderos que se bifurcan'', in *Jorge Luis Borges: pensamiento y saber en el siglo XX*, ed. by Alfonso de Toro and Fernando de Toro (Frankfurt: Vervuert, 1999), 71-103
Eco, Umberto, 'Metaphor, Dictionary, and Encyclopedia', *New Literary History*, 15 (1984), 255-71
Eco, Umberto, 'L'abduzione in Uqbar', in his *Sugli specchi e altri saggi* (Milan: Bompiani, 1985), 161-72
Eco, Umberto, 'La combinatoria dei possibili e l'incombenza della morte', in his *Sugli specchi e altri saggi* (Milan: Bompiani, 1985), 196-211
Eco, Umberto, and Thomas A. Sebeok, eds, *The Sign of Three: Dupin, Holmes, Peirce* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988)
Eco, Umberto, 'Between La Mancha and Babel', *Variaciones Borges*, 4 (1997), 51-62
Edwards, Brian, 'Deconstructing the Artist and the Art: Barth and Calvino at Play in the Funhouse of Language', *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, 12 (1985), 264-86
Ehrmann, Jacques, 'Homo Ludens Revisited', trans. by Cathy Lewis and Phil Lewis, *Yale French Studies*, 41 (1968), 31-57
Eichner, Hans, 'The Rise of Modern Science and the Genesis of Romanticism', *PMLA*, 97 (1982), 8-30
Eliot, T. S., *Collected Poems 1909-1962* (London: Faber and Faber, 1974)
Ellis, M. J., *Why People Play* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1973)
Eoyang, Eugene, 'Chaos Misread: Or, There's Wonton in My Soup!', *Comparative Literature Studies*, 26 (1989), 271-84
Erro, Carlos Alberto, 'Conversación sobre *Inquisiciones*', in his *Medida de criollismo* (Buenos Aires: Porter, 1929), 95-110
Etiemble, René, *Comparaison n'est pas raison: la crise de la littérature comparée* (Paris: Gallimard, 1963)
Evans, B. Ifor, *Literature and Science* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1954)
Evans, Michael, 'Intertextual Labyrinth: 'El inmortal' by Borges', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 20 (1984), 275-81
Fabbri, Paolo, 'Le trame del Bagatto: Arcani narrativi e orditi del dire', in *Narratori dell'invisibile: simposio in memoria di Italo Calvino*, ed. by Beppe Cottafavi and Maurizio Magri (Modena: Mucchi, 1987), 23-33
Falaschi, Giovanni, 'Negli anni del neorealismo', in *Italo Calvino: atti del convegno internazionale*, ed. by Giovanni Falaschi (Florence: Garzanti, 1988), 113-40
Fancello, Salvatore, 'L'occhio su Calvino', *Belfagor*, 55 (2000), 572-80
Farías, Víctor, *Las actas secretas:* Inquisiciones *y* El idioma de los argentinos, *los otros libros proscritos de Jorge Luis Borges* (Madrid: Anaya & Mario Muchnik, 1994)
Faris, Wendy B., *Labyrinths of Language: Symbolic Landscape and Narrative Design in Modern Fiction* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988)
Faris, Wendy B., 'The Labyrinth as Sign', in *City Images: Perspectives from Literature, Philosophy, and Film*, ed. by Mary Ann Caws (New York, Philadelphia, and London: Gordon and Breach, 1991), 33-41
Faris, Wendy B., 'The Question of the Other: Cultural Critiques of Magical Realism', *Janus Head*, 5.2 (2003), 101-19

Faulkner, Peter, *Modernism* (London and New York: Methuen, 1977)
Feinstein, Wiley, 'The Doctrinal Core of *If on a winter's night a traveler*', in *Calvino Revisited*, ed. by Franco Ricci (Ottawa: Dovehouse, 1989), 147-55
Fernández Moreno, César, 'Weary of Labyrinths: An Interview with Jorge Luis Borges', trans. by John C. Murchison, *Encounter*, 32 (1969), 3-14
Fernández Vega, José, 'Una campaña estética. Borges y la narrativa policial', *Variaciones Borges*, 1 (1996), 27-66
Ferraris, Denis, 'Borges avec Calvino: le principe d'understatement', in *Borges, Calvino, la literatura*, ed. by Alain Sicard and Fernando Moreno, 2 vols (Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos, 1996), ii, 49-60
Ferraro, Bruno, 'Il castello dell'If e la sua struttura in *Le città invisibili* di Italo Calvino', *Letteratura Italiana Contemporanea*, 22 (1987), 95-113
Ferraro, Bruno, 'Italo Calvino's *Le città invisibili* and 'La sfida al labirinto', *The Italianist*, 8 (1988), 56-65
Ferraro, Bruno, 'Percorsi narrativi e tracciati temporali nelle *città invisibili* di Italo Calvino', *Italianistica*, 23 (1994), 483-90
Ferraro, Bruno, 'Dallo scudo di Agilulfo al tappeto di Eudossia: geometrie narrative in alcune opere di Italo Calvino', in *Italo Calvino: A Writer for the Next Millennium*, ed. by Giorgio Bertone (Alexandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 1998), 133-49
Ferrer, Manuel, *Borges y la nada* (London: Tamesis, 1971)
Ferretti, Giancarlo, 'Il neorealismo', in *Letteratura italiana: testi e critica con lineamenti di storia letteraria*, ed. by Mario Pazzaglia, 2nd edn (Bologna: Nicola Zanichelli, 1986; first publ. 1979)
Ferretti, Giancarlo, 'Calvino e l'alterità cosmicomica', *Letteratura Italiana Contemporanea*, 25 (1988), 25-29.
Ferretti, Giancarlo, 'Le avventure del lettore', in *Italo Calvino: A Writer for the Next Millennium*, ed. by Giorgio Bertone (Alexandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 1998), 79-91
Ferroni, Giulio, 'Italo Calvino', in *Storia della letteratura italiana*, 4 vols (Milan: Einaudi, 1991), iv, 568-89
Festa-McCormick, Diana, *The City as Catalyst: A Study of Ten Novels* (New Jersey and London: Associated Presses, 1979)
Fiedler, Leslie, 'The New Mutants', in his *The Collected Essays of Leslie Fiedler*, 2 vols (New York: Stein and Day, 1971), ii, 379-400 (first publ. 1965)
Fink, Eugen, 'The Oasis of Happiness: Toward an Ontology of Play', trans. by Ute Saine and Thomas Saine, *Yale French Studies*, 41 (1968), 19-30
Fishburn, Evelyn and Psiche Hughes, *A Dictionary of Borges* (London: Duckworth, 1990)
Fishburn, Evelyn, ed., *Borges and Europe Revisited* (London: Institute of Latin American Studies, University of London, 1998)
Fishburn, Evelyn, 'Hidden Pleasures in Borges's Allusions', in *Borges and Europe Revisited*, ed. by Evelyn Fishburn (London: Institute of Latin American Studies, University of London, 1998), 49-59
Flores, Ángel, ed., *Expliquémonos a Borges como poeta* (Mexico: Siglo XXI, 1984)
Fokkema, Douwe W., 'Comparative Literature and the New Paradigm', *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, 9 (1982), 1-18
Fokkema, Douwe W., *Literary History, Modernism, and Postmodernism* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1984)
Fokkema, Douwe W., 'The Semantic and Syntactic Organisation of Postmodernist Text', in *Approaching Postmodernism*, ed. by Douwe W. Fokkema and Hans Bertens (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1986), 81-98

Fokkema, Douwe W., and Hans Bertens, eds, *Approaching Postmodernism* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1986)

Forster, Ricardo, 'Borges y Benjamin', *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos*, 505-507 (1992), 507-23

Foster, David William, 'Borges and Structuralism: Toward an Implied Poetics', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 3 (1973), 341-51

Foster, David William, 'Para una caracterización de la *escritura* en los relatos de Borges', *Revista Iberoamericana*, 100-101 (1977), 337-55

Foster, David William, and Virginia Ramos Foster, eds, *Modern Latin American Literature*, 2 vols (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1975)

Foster, David William, *Jorge Luis Borges: An Annotated Primary and Secondary Bibliography* (New York and London: Garland, 1984)

Foster, Hal, ed., *Postmodern Culture* (London and Sydney: Pluto, 1985)

Foucault, Michel, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (London: Routledge, 1970; first publ. 1966)

Foucault, Michel, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, ed. and trans. by Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977)

Foucault, Michel, 'What is an Author?', trans. by Josué V. Harari, in *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, ed. by Josué V. Harari (London: Methuen, 1980; first publ. 1979)

Foucault, Michel, *The Foucault Reader. An Introduction to Foucault's Thought*, ed. by Paul Rubinow (London: Penguin, 1991; first publ. 1984)

Fowler, Roger, *Linguistic Criticism*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996; first publ. 1986)

Fowles, John, *The Aristos*, rev edn (London: Pan, 1968; first publ. 1965)

Franchi, Stefano, 'Palomar, the Triviality of Modernity, and the Doctrine of the Void', *New Literary History*, 28 (1997), 757-78

Franco, Jean, *An Introduction to Spanish-American Literature*, 3rd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994; first publ. 1969)

Frank, Joseph, *The Widening Gyre: Crisis and Mastery in Modern Literature* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1963)

Frank, Roslyn M., and Vosburg, Nancy, 'Textos y contra-textos en 'El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan'', *Revista Iberoamericana*, 100-101 (1977), 517-34

Friedman, Sorel Thompson, '*t zero*: Italo Calvino's Minimalist Narrative', *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 6.2 (1986), 19-23

Frisby, David, *Cityscapes of Modernity: Critical Explorations* (Cambridge: Polity, 2001)

Fuentes, Carlos, 'The Accidents of Time', in *The Borges Tradition*, ed. by Norman Thomas di Giovanni (London: Constable, 1995), 49-69

Fuentes, Carlos, 'Jorge Luis Borges: la herida de Babel', in *Borges: desesperaciones aparentes y consuelos secretos*, ed. by Rafael Olea Franco (Mexico: El Colegio de México, 1999), 293-312

Fullbrook, Kate, 'The Godfather: Borges and the Ethics of the Labyrinth', in *Just Postmodernism*, ed. by Steven Earnshaw (Amsterdam: Atlanta, 1997), 181-96

Gabriele, Tommasina, *Italo Calvino: Eros and Language* (Rutherford and London: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press and Associated University Press, 1994)

Galilei, Galileo, *Discoveries and Opinions of Galileo*, ed. and trans. by Stillman Drake (New York: Anchor, 1957)

Galilei, Galileo, *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems – Ptolemaic & Copernican*, ed. and trans. by Stillman Drake, 2nd edn (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967; first publ. 1630)

Gallagher, D. P., *Modern Latin American Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973)

Gallo, Marta, 'Semiosis y símbolo en la *búsqueda* como función narrativa en los cuentos de Borges', *Revista Iberoamericana*, 130-131 (1985), 197-207

Gallone, Osvaldo, 'Dos aspectos de la obra de Jorge Luis Borges', in *Borges en 10 miradas*, ed. by Osvaldo Ferrari and others (Buenos Aires: Fundación El Libro, 1999), 69-83

Gálvez, Raul, *From the Ashen Land of the Virgin: Conversations with Bioy Casares, Borges, Denevi, Etchecopar, Ocampo, Orozco, Sábato in Argentina* (Oakville and London: Mosaic, 1989)

Garboli, Cesare, 'Come sei, lettrice?', *Paragone*, 366 (1980), 63-71

García Martín, José Luis, 'Sobre la imposibilidad de la biblioteca de Babel', *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos* 273 (1973), 507-11

Garvey, Catherine, *Play* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1990; first publ. 1977)

Gass, William H., 'Imaginary Borges and his Books', in *Critical Essays on Jorge Luis Borges*, ed. by Jaime Alazraki (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1987), 108-16

Gatt-Rutter, John, 'Calvino Ludens: Literary Play and its Political Implications', *Journal of European Studies*, 5 (1975), 319-40

Gatt-Rutter, John, 'Calvino's Macrocosm: The Politics of Play', in his *Writers and Politics in Modern Italy* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1978), 46-51

Genette, Gérard, 'Boundaries of Narrative', trans. by Ann Levonas, *New Literary History*, 8 (1976-77), 1-13

Gertel, Zunilda, ''El sur', de Borges; búsqueda de identidad en el laberinto', *Nueva Narrativa Hispanoamerica*, 1 (1971), 35-55

Gertel, Zunilda, 'La imagen metafísica en la poesía de Borges', *Revista Iberoamericana*, 100-101 (1977), 433-48

Gery, John, 'Love and Annihilation in Calvino's Qfwfq Tales', *Critique: Studies in Modern Fiction*, 30 (1988), 59-68

Ghidetti, Enrico, 'Il fantastico ben temperato di Italo Calvino', in *Italo Calvino: atti del convegno internazionale*, ed. by Giovanni Falaschi (Florence: Garzanti, 1988), 171-85

Gibson, Andrew, *Towards a Postmodern Theory of Narrative* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996)

Giere, Ronald N., 'Philosophy of Science: An Enlightened Postmodern Perspective', *Noûs*, 24 (1990), 291-92

Gifford, Henry, *Comparative Literature* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969)

Gillies, Alexander, 'Some Thoughts on Comparative Literature', *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature*, 1 (1952), 15-25

Gilloch, Graeme, *Myth and Metropolis: Walter Benjamin and the City* (Oxford: Polity, 1996)

Gioanola, Elio, 'Modalità del fantastico nell'opera di Italo Calvino', in *Italo Calvino: la letteratura, la scienza, la città*, ed. by Giorgio Bertone (Genoa: Marietti, 1988), 20-35

Gleick, James, *Chaos: Making a New Science* (London: Vintage, 1998)

Goldsmith, Maurice, Alan Mackay, and James Woudhuysen, eds, *Einstein: The First Hundred Years* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1980)

González, Darío, 'La extenuación de la imagen', *Variaciones Borges*, 3 (1997), 120-40

González Echevarría, Roberto, 'Borges en 'El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan'', in *Borges: desesperaciones aparentes y consuelos secretos*, ed. by Rafael Olea Franco (Mexico: El Colegio de México, 1999), 61-74

Gracia, Jorge J. E., 'Borges's 'Pierre Menard': Philosophy or Literature?', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 59 (2001), 45-57

Gracia, Jorge J. E., Carolyn Korsmeyer, and Rodolphe Gasché, eds, *Literary Philosophers: Borges, Calvino, Eco* (New York and London: Routledge, 2002)

Graff, Gerald, *Literature against Itself: Literary Ideas in Modern Society* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1979)

Graff, Gerald, 'Determinacy/Indeterminacy', in *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, ed. by Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin, 2nd edn (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995; first publ. 1990), 163-76

Gramigna, Giuliano, 'Una logica del meraviglioso', in *Narratori dell'invisibile: simposio in memoria di Italo Calvino*, ed. by Beppe Cottafavi and Maurizio Magri (Modena: Mucchi, 1987), 51-55

Gramuglio, María Teresa, 'El ejercicio melancólico de las letras', *Variaciones Borges*, 3 (1997), 46-53

Granata, Patricia, '*El nombre de la rosa*: Umberto Eco, Jorge Luis Borges y el nominalismo', *Weltliteratur: Cuadernos de Literatura Comparada*, 1 (1994), 141-49

Grande, Felix, ed., *Homenaje a Jorge Luis Borges* (Madrid: Instituto de Cooperación Iberoamericana, 1992)

Grau, Cristina, *Borges y la arquitectura*, 3rd edn (Madrid: Cátedra, 1997)

Grebogi, Celso, and James A. Yorke, eds, *The Impact of Chaos on Science and Society* (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 1997)

Green, Geoffrey, 'Ghosts and Shadows: Reading and Writing in Italo Calvino's *If on a winter's night a traveller*', *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 6.2 (1986), 101-5

Greimas, Algirdas-Julien, *Structural Semantics*, trans. by Daniele McDowell, Ronald Schleifer, and Alan Velie (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1983; first publ. 1966)

Grossvogel, David I., *Mystery and its Fictions: From Oedipus to Agatha Christie* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979)

Guérard, Albert, 'Comparative Literature?', *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature*, 7 (1958), 1-6

Guardiani, Francesco, 'Optimism without Illusions', *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 6.2 (1986), 54-61

Guerra Castellanos, Eduardo, 'Tiempo y espacio en la producción de Jorge Luis Borges', *Humanitas*, 18 (1977), 245-50

Guerrasi, Vincenzo, 'La città perfetta', in *Italo Calvino: A Writer for the Next Millennium*, ed. by Giorgio Bertone (Alexandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 1998), 279-87

Guillén, Claudio, *Literature as System: Essays towards the Theory of Literary History* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1971)

Guj, Luisa, 'The Shapeless and the Well-Designed: An Unresolved Dichotomy in Calvino's Narrative?', *Modern Language Review*, 82 (1988), 206-17

Gullón, Ricardo, 'On Space in the Novel', trans. by René de Costa, *Critical Inquiry*, 2 (1975), 11-28

Gutiérrez Brida, Marcelo, 'Borges, Calvino: temporalidad y paradoja', in *Borges, Calvino, la literatura*, ed. by Alain Sicard and Fernando Moreno, 2 vols (Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos, 1996), ii, 249-64

Gutiérrez Girardot, Rafael, *Jorge Luis Borges: Ensayo de interpretación* (Madrid: Insula, 1959)

Gutiérrez Girardot, Rafael, 'Crítica literaria y filosofía en Jorge Luis Borges', *Cuadernos Hispanoamericano*, 505-507 (1992), 279-97

Habermas, Jürgen, 'Modernity versus Postmodernity', trans. by Seyla Ben-Habib, *New German Critique*, 22 (1981), 3-14

Hacking, Ian, *Representing and Intervening: Introductory Topics in the Philosophy of Natural Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983)

Hahn, Oscar, *Texto sobre texto: aproximaciones a Herrera y Reissig, Huidobro, Borges, Cortázar, Lihn* (Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1984)

Hall, J. B., 'Deception or Self-Deception? The Essential Ambiguity of Borges' 'Emma Zunz'', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 18 (1982), 258-65

Hall, Stuart, ed., *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage, 1997)

Haraway, Donna, 'Enlightenment@science_wars.com: A Personal Reflection on Love and War', *Social Text*, 50 (1997), 123-29

Harré, Rom, *The Philosophies of Science: An Introductory Survey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972)

Harré, Rom, 'Some Narrative Conventions of Scientific Discourse', in *Narrative in Culture: The Uses of Storytelling in the Sciences, Philosophy, and Literature*, ed. by Cristopher Nash (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 81-101

Harss, Luis, and Barbara Dohmann, *Los nuestros*, 9th edn (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1981; first publ. 1966)

Hart, Thomas R., Jr., 'The Literary Criticism of Jorge Luis Borges', *Modern Language Notes* 5 (1963), 489-503

Hartman, Geoffrey H., 'Literature High and Low: The Case of the Mystery Story', in his *The Fate of Reading and Other Essays* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1975), 203-22

Hartman, Geoffrey H., 'Review of *The Aleph and Other Stories 1933-1969*', in *Critical Essays on Jorge Luis Borges*, ed. by Jaime Alazraki (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1987), 125-27

Harvey, Charles, 'Natural Science Is Human Science. Human Science Is Natural Science: Never the Twain Shall Meet', in *Continental and Postmodern Perspectives in the Philosophy of Science*, ed. by Babette E. Babich, Debra B. Bergoffen, and Simon V. Glynn (Aldershot: Avebury, 1995), 121-36

Harvey, David, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Oxford: Blackwell, 1990)

Hassan, Ihab, and Sally Hassan, eds, *Innovation/Renovation: New Perspectives on the Humanities* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983)

Hassan, Ihab, *The Postmodern Turn: Essays in Postmodern Theory and Culture* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1987)

Hatlen, Burton, 'Borges and Metafiction', in *Simply a Man of Letters*, ed. by Carlos Cortinez (Orono, Maine: University of Maine at Orono Press, 1982), 131-54

Hawkins, Harriett, *Strange Attractors: Literature, Culture and Chaos Theory* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1995)

Hayles, N. Katherine, *The Cosmic Web: Scientific Field Models & Literary Strategies in the Twentieth Century* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1984)

Hayles, N. Katherine, 'Chaos as Orderly Disorder: Shifting Ground in Contemporary Literature and Science', *New Literary History*, 20 (1989), 305-22

Hayles, N. Katherine, 'Literature and Science', in *Encyclopedia of Literature and Criticism*, ed. by Martin Coyle and others (London: Routledge, 1990), 1068-81

Hayles, N. Katherine, *Chaos Bound: Orderly Disorder in Contemporary Literature and Science* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990)

Hayles, N. Katherine, 'Introduction: Complex Dynamics in Literature and Science', in *Chaos and Order: Complex Dynamics in Literature and Science*, ed. by N. Katherine Hayles (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 1-33

Hayles, N. Katherine, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1999)

Heath, Stephen, 'Modern Literary Theory', *Critical Quarterly*, 31 (1989), 35-49

Heidegger, Martin, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. by William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1977)

Heiney, Donald, 'Calvino and Borges: Some Implications of Fantasy', *Mundus Artium*, 2 (1968), 66-76

Helft, Nicolás, *Jorge Luis Borges: bibliografía completa* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1997)

Hernadi, Paul, 'On the How, What, and Why of Narrative', in *On Narrative*, ed. by W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 197-99

Hernández Martín, Jorge, *Readers and Labyrinths: Detective Fiction in Borges, Bustos Domecq, and Eco* (New York and London: Garland, 1995)

Hernández Martín, Jorge, 'Kabbalistic Borges and Textual Golems', *Variaciones Borges*, 10 (2000), 65-78

Hirsch, E. D., *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1969)

Hirsch, E. D., *The Aims of Interpretation* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1976)

Hodge, M. J. S., and G. N. Cantor, 'The Development of Philosophy of Science Since 1900', in *Companion to the History of Modern Science*, ed. by R. C. Olby and others (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 838-52

Holden, Arun V., 'Chaos in Complicated Systems', *Nature*, 305 (1983), 183

Holquist, Michael, 'Whodunnit and Other Questions: Metaphysical Detective Stories in Post-War Fiction', *New Literary History*, 3 (1971-72), 135-56

Holton, Gerald, and Yehuda Elkana, eds, *Albert Einstein: Historical and Cultural Perspectives* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982)

House, Stephen, 'The Encyclopedia Complex: Contemporary Narratives of Information', *SubStance*, 92 (2000), 25-46

Hühn, Peter, 'The Detective as Reader: Narrativity and Reading Concepts in Detective Fiction', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 33 (1987), 451-66

Huizinga, Johan, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (London: Paladin, 1970; first publ. 1938)

Hume, David, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. by Ernest C. Mossner (London: Penguin, 1984; first publ. 1739)

Hume, Kathryn, 'Calvino's Framed Narrations: Writers, Readers, and Reality', *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 6.2 (1986), 71-80

Hume, Kathryn, 'Grains of Sand in a Sea of Objects: Italo Calvino as Essayist', *Modern Language Review*, 87 (1992), 72-85

Hume, Kathryn, *Calvino's Fictions: Cogito and Cosmos* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992)

Hutcheon, Linda, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (New York and London: Routledge, 1985)

Hutcheon, Linda, 'Metafictional Implications for Novelistic Reference', in *On Referring in Literature*, ed. by Anna Whiteside and Michael Issacharoff (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 1-13

Hutcheon, Linda, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988)

Hutcheon, Linda, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989)

Hutchinson, Peter, *Games Authors Play* (London and New York: Methuen, 1983)

Huyssen, Andreas, 'Mapping the Postmodern', *New German Critique*, 33 (1984), 5-52

Iaquinta, Giovanni, 'Calvino: le parole e le cose', in *Borges, Calvino, la literatura*, ed. by Alain Sicard and Fernando Moreno, 2 vols (Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos, 1996), i, 241-62

Idoria, Irma, 'Símbolos en la biblioteca de Babel', *Cuadernos del Sur* 19-20 (1986-1987), 85-95

Irby, James E., 'Some Notes on 'Pierre Menard'', in *Simply a Man of Letters*, ed. by Carlos Cortinez (Orono, Maine: University of Maine at Orono Press, 1982), 155-64

Irwin, John Thomas, 'Mysteries We Read, Mysteries of Rereading. Poe, Borges, and the Analytic Detective Story; Also Lacan, Derrida, and Johnson', *Modern Language Notes*, 101.5 (1986), 1168-215

Irwin, John Thomas, *The Mystery to a Solution: Poe, Borges, and the Analytic Detective Story* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1994)

Irwin, William, 'Philosophy and the Philosophical, Literature and the Literary, Borges and the Labyrinthine', in *Literary Philosophers: Borges, Calvino, Eco*, ed. by Jorge J. E. Gracia, Carolyn Korsmeyer, and Rodolphe Gasché (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), 27-45

Isaacs, Neil D., 'The Labyrinth of Art in Four *Ficciones* of Jorge Luis Borges', *Studies in Short Fiction*, 6 (1969), 383-94

Iser, Wolfgang, 'Representation: A Performative Act', in *The Aims of Representation: Subject/ Text/ History*, ed. by Murray Krieger (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 217-32

Jacobsen, Mara Mauri, '*Palomar* e il viaggio di Calvino dall''esattezza' alla 'leggerezza'', *Italica*, 69 (1992), 489-504

Jaén, Didier T., *Borges' Esoteric Library: Metaphysics to Metafiction* (Lanham, New York, and London: University Press of America, 1992)

James, Carol P., 'Seriality and Narrativity in Calvino's *Le città invisibili*', *Modern Language Notes*, 97 (1982), 144-61

James, Carol P., 'The Fragmentation of Allegory in Calvino's *Invisible Cities*', *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 6.2 (1986), 88-94

James, Phyllis Dorothy, 'The Craft of Crime Writing', in *The Borges Lectures* (London: Anglo-Argentine Society, 1999), 11-35

Jaskolski, Helmut, *The Labyrinth: Symbol of Fear, Rebirth, and Liberation*, trans. by Michael H. Kohn (Boston and London: Shambhala, 1997)

Jitrik, Noé, *El fuego de la especie* (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno, 1971)

Jitrik, Noé, 'Hacia una semiótica de la riqueza', in *Borges, Calvino, la literatura*, ed. by Alain Sicard and Fernando Moreno, 2 vols (Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos, 1996), i, 57-65

Johansson, Anders, 'Borges Beyond Interpretations. Changeability and Form in 'La secta del Fénix'', *Variaciones Borges*, 9 (2000), 177-201

Johnston, John, *Information Multiplicity: American Fiction in the Age of Media Saturation* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998)

Johnston, Martin, 'Games with Infinity. The Fiction of Jorge Luis Borges', *Variaciones Borges*, 5 (1998), 177-202

Joseph, Gerhard, 'The Labyrinth and the Library *en abyme*: Eco, Borges, Dickens ...', in *City Images: Perspectives from Literature, Philosophy, and Film*, ed. by Mary Ann Caws (New York, Philadelphia, and London: Gordon and Breach, 1991), 42-59

Joseph, John Earl, 'Man, History, Subject, Object: Calvino in Crisis', *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 6.2 (1986), 24-30

Josipovici, Gabriel, *The World and the Book: A Study of Modern Fiction*, 2nd edn (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1979; first publ. 1971)

Josipovici, Gabriel, 'Borges and the Plain Sense of Things', in *Borges and Europe Revisited*, ed. by Evelyn Fishburn (London: Institute of Latin American Studies, University of London, 1998), 60-67

Jost, François, *Introduction to Comparative Literature* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1974)

Juhl, P. D., *Interpretation: An Essay in the Philosophy of Literary Criticism* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980)

Jullien, Dominique, 'Biography of an Immortal', *Comparative Literature*, 47 (1995), 136-159

Jurado, Alicia, *Genio y figura de Jorge Luis Borges*, 2nd edn (Buenos Aires: Editorial Universitaria de Buenos Aires, 1966)

Jurado, Alicia, 'El ensayo en la obra de Borges', *Boletín de la Academia Argentina de Letras*, 241-242 (1996), 291-99

Kaminsky, Gregorio, ed., *Borges y la filosofía* (Buenos Aires: Instituto de Filosofía, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Universidad de Buenos Aires, 1994)

Kant, Immanuel, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. Paul Guyer, trans. by Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000; first publ. 1790)

Kaplan, Marina E., ''Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius' y 'Urn Burial'', *Comparative Literature*, 36 (1984), 328-42

Kazin, Alfred, 'Reflexiones sobre Borges y la literatura norteamericana del siglo XIX', trans. by Jaime Alazraki, in *Jorge Luis Borges*, ed. by Jaime Alazraki (Madrid: Taurus, 1976), 248-51

Kazin, Alfred, 'Meeting Borges', in *Critical Essays on Jorge Luis Borges*, ed. by Jaime Alazraki (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1987), 127-30

Kearney, Richard, *Poetics of Imagining: Modern to Postmodern* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998; first publ. as *Poetics of Imagining: From Husserl to Lyotard* in 1991)

Kermode, Frank, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968)

Kermode, Frank, 'Secrets and Narrative Sequence', in *On Narrative*, ed. by W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 79-97

King, John, 'Jorge Luis Borges: A View from the Periphery', in *Modern Latin American Fiction: A Survey*, ed. by John King (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1987), 101-16

Kiremidjian, G. D., 'The Aesthetics of Parody', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 28 (1969), 231-42

Klaus, H. Gustav, and Stephen Knight, eds, *The Art of Murder: New Essays on Detective Fiction* (Tü-bingen: Stauffenburg, 1998)

Knight, Stephen, *Form and Ideology in Crime Fiction* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1980)

Knight, Stephen, 'Enter the Detective: Early Patterns of Crime Fiction', in *The Art of Murder: New Essays on Detective Fiction*, ed. by H. Gustav Klaus and Stephen Knight (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1998), 10-25

Koelb, Clayton, and Susan Noakes, eds, *The Comparative Perspective on Literature: Approaches to Theory and Practice* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988)

Kristal, Efraín, *Invisible Work: Borges and Translation* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2002)

Krysinski, Wladimir, 'Borges, Calvino, Eco: The Philosophies of Metafiction', in *Literary Philosophers: Borges, Calvino, Eco*, ed. by Jorge J. E. Gracia, Carolyn Korsmeyer, and Rodolphe Gasché (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), 185-204

La Polla, Franco, 'A Note on *Marcovaldo*', *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 6.2 (1986), 38-41

Lafon, Michel, 'Borges, Calvino et la littérature', in *Borges, Calvino, la literatura*, ed. by Alain Sicard and Fernando Moreno, 2 vols (Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos, 1996), i, 11-25

Lafuente, Federico Horacio, '*Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius*. Jorge Luis Borges [1940]', in *Borges en 10 miradas*, ed. by Osvaldo Ferrari and others (Buenos Aires: Fundación El Libro, 1999), 107-45

Lajara, Ricardo, 'El laberinto como metáfora espacial en Borges y Calvino', in *Borges, Calvino, la literatura*, ed. by Alain Sicard and Fernando Moreno, 2 vols (Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos, 1996), ii, 145-49

Lange, Bernd-Peter, 'The Detective as Genteel Chess Player: Poe, Doyle, Dibdin', in *The Art of Murder: New Essays on Detective Fiction*, ed. by H. Gustav Klaus and Stephen Knight (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1998), 50-66

Lapidot, Ema, 'Borges y Escher: Artistas contemporaneos', *Revista Iberoamericana*, 155-156 (1991), 607-15

Lavagetto, Mario, 'Per l'identità di uno scrittore di apocrifi', *Paragone*, 366 (1980), 71-81

Lawrence, Ramsey, 'Religious Subtext and Narrative Structure in Borges', *Variaciones Borges*, 10 (2000), 119-38

Leavis, F. R., and Michael Yudkin, *Two Cultures? The Significance of C. P. Snow with an Essay on Sir Charles Snow's Rede Lectures* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1962)

Lefere, Robin, 'Borges ante la noción de 'posmodernidad'', *Variaciones Borges*, 9 (2000), 211-20

Lessing, Gotthold Ephraim, *Laocoön*, trans. by Sir Robert Phillimore (London: Routledge, 1910)

Lethen, Helmut, 'Modernism Cut in Half: The Exclusion of the Avant-Garde and the Debate on Postmodernism', in *Approaching Postmodernism*, ed. by Douwe W. Fokkema and Hans Bertens (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1986), 233-38

Levin, Harry, 'Thematics and Criticism', in *The Disciplines of Criticism: Essays in Literary Theory, Interpretation, and History*, ed. by Peter Demetz, Thomas Greene, and Lowry Nelson, Jr. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1968), 125-43

Levin, Harry, 'Comparing the Literature', *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature*, 17 (1968), 5-16

Levin, Harry, *Grounds for Comparison* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972)

Levine, Suzanne Jill, 'Borges and Emir: The Writer and his Reader', in *Borges and his Successors: The Borgesian Impact on Literature and the Arts*, ed. by Edna Aizenberg (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1990), 122-27

Lida, Raimundo, 'Notas a Borges', in *Jorge Luis Borges*, ed. by Jaime Alazraki (Madrid: Taurus, 1976), 75-77

Liggera, Ruben A., 'La noche que el otro Borges decidió morir', *Alba de América*, 8-9 (1987), 47-51

Lojo de Beuter, María Rosa, 'La concepción borgeana del símbolo', *Alba de América*, 2-3 (1984), 109-22

López Badano, Cecilia, 'Lecturas del postestructuralismo a Borges', in *Borges y la filosofía*, ed. by Gregorio Kaminsky (Buenos Aires: Instituto de Filosofía, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Universidad de Buenos Aires, 1994), 95-106

Lorenzini, Lucia, 'L'ordine della letteratura, il disordine della realtà', in *Borges, Calvino, la literatura*, ed. by Alain Sicard and Fernando Moreno, 2 vols (Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos, 1996), ii, 235-47

Lotman, Jurij, *The Structure of the Artistic Text*, trans. by Gail Lenhoff and Ronald Vroon (Michigan, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan, 1977)

Lotringer, Sylvère, ed., *Foucault Live: Collected Interviews, 1961-1984*, trans. by Lysa Hochroth and John Johnston (New York: Semiotext(e), 1996)

Lucente, Gregory L., 'An Interview with Italo Calvino', *Contemporary Literature*, 26 (1985), 245-53

Lucente, Gregory L., *Beautiful Fables: Self-consciousness in Italian Narrative from Manzoni to Calvino* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986)

Luna, Félix, 'Borges con nosotros', *Todo es Historia*, August 1999, 6-7

Luperini, Romano, *Il novecento: apparati ideologici, ceto intellettuale, sistemi formali nella letteratura italiana contemporanea*, 2 vols (Turin: Loescher Editore, 1981)

Lyotard, Jean-François, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984; first publ. 1979)

Macherey, Pierre, *A Theory of Literary Production*, trans. by Geoffrey Wall (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978; first publ. 1966)

Macmurray, George R., *Jorge Luis Borges* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1980)

Madison, G. B., *The Hermeneutics of Postmodernity: Figures and Themes* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988)

Madrid, Lelia M., 'Jorge Luis Borges: la parodia del centro', *Mundi*, 9 (1991), 44-69

Madsen, Deborah L, and Mark S. Madsen, 'Fractals, Chaos and Dynamics: The Emergence of Postmodern Science', in *Postmodern Surroundings*, ed. by Steven Earnshaw (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994), 119-32

Mailloux, Steven, 'Interpretation', in *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, ed. by Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin, 2nd edn (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995; first publ. 1990), 121-34

Malmgren, Carl D., 'Romancing the Reader: Calvino's *If on a winter's night a traveller*', *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 6.2 (1986), 106-16

Malone, David H., 'The 'Comparative' in Comparative Literature', *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature*, 3 (1954), 13-20

Manacorda, Giuliano, 'Calvino', in *Storia della letteratura italiana contemporanea*, 2 vols (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1996), ii, 693-99

Mandelbrot, Benoit B., *The Fractal Geometry of Nature* (San Francisco: Freeman, 1982)

Manzi, Joaquín, 'Formas de lo visible y lo invisible en Calvino, Saer y Borges', in *Borges, Calvino, la literatura*, ed. by Alain Sicard and Fernando Moreno, 2 vols (Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos, 1996), ii, 265-80

Marco, Joaquin, ed., *Asedio a Jorge Luis Borges* (Madrid: Ultramar, 1981)

Marco, Joaquín, 'Una aproximación más a Jorge Luis Borges', in *Asedio a Jorge Luis Borges*, ed. by Joaquín Marco (Madrid: Ultramar, 1981), 7-21

Marello, Laura, 'Form and Formula in Calvino's *Invisible Cities*', *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 6.2 (1986), 95-100

Marino, Giambattista, *Opere*, ed. by Alberto Asor Rosa (Milan: Rizzoli, 1967)

Markey, Constance, 'Calvino and the Existential Dilemma: The Paradox of Choice', *Italica*, 60 (1983), 55-70

Markey, Constance, *Italo Calvino: A Journey Toward Postmodernism* (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 1999)

Markley, Robert, 'Representing Order: Natural Philosophy, Mathematics, and Theology in the Newtonian Revolution', in *Chaos and Order: Complex Dynamics in Literature and Science*, ed. by N. Katherine Hayles (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1991), 125-48

Martin, Gerald, *Journeys through the Labyrinth: Latin American Fiction in the Twentieth Century* (London and New York: Verso, 1989)

Martínez-Bonati, Félix, 'The Act of Writing Fiction', *New Literary History*, 11 (1980), 425-34

Martínez-Bonati, Félix, 'Towards a Formal Ontology of Fictional Worlds', *Philosophy and Literature*, 7 (1983), 182-95

Massuh, Gabriela, *Borges: una estética del silencio* (Buenos Aires: Editorial de Belgrano, 1980)

Massuh, Gabriela, ''La lotería en Babilonia': una comparación entre Kafka y Borges', *Boletín de Literatura Comparada*, 7-8 (1982-1983), 21-37

Matamoro, Blas, 'Yo y el otro, Eros y Tánatos, masculino y femenino', *Variaciones Borges*, 9 (2000), 221-26

Mateos, Zulma, *La filosofía en la obra de Jorge Luis Borges* (Buenos Aires: Biblos, 1998)

Mathews, Harry, 'La camera ardente', *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 6.2 (1986), 7-10

Mattalía Alonso, Sonia, and Juan Miguel Company Ramón, 'Lo real como imposible en Borges', *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos*, 431 (1986), 133-42

Maurois, André, 'Preface', trans. by Sherry Mangan, in Borges, Jorge Luis, *Labyrinths*, ed. by Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby (London: Penguin, 1970), 9-14

Mazlish, Bruce, 'The *Flâneur*: From Spectator to Representation', in *The Flâneur*, ed. by Keith Tester (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 43-60

McCole, John, 'Benjamin's *Passagen-Werk*: A Guide to the Labyrinth', *Theory and Society*, 14 (1985), 497-509

McGrady, Donald, 'Sobre la influencia de Borges en *Il nome della rosa* de Eco', *Revista Iberoamericana*, 141 (1987),787-806

McGuirk, Bernard J., 'Seminar on Jorge Luis Borges's 'Death and the Compass'', *Renaissance and Modern Studies* 27 (1983), 47-60

McHale, Brian, *Postmodernist Fiction* (London and New York: Methuen, 1987)

McLaughlin, Martin, 'Borges e Calvino, la letteratura e l'intelletto', in *Borges, Calvino, la literatura*, ed. by Alain Sicard and Fernando Moreno, 2 vols (Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos, 1996), i, 85-103

McLaughlin, Martin, *Italo Calvino* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998)

McLaughlin, Martin, 'Note to the 1998 Translation', in *The Path to the Spiders' Nests*, by Italo Calvino (London: Vintage, 1998), 1-5

McMullin, Ernan, 'The Development of Philosophy of Science 1600-1900', in *Companion to the History of Modern Science*, ed. by R. C. Olby and others (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 816-37

McRae, Murdo William, ed., *The Literature of Science: Perspectives on Popular Scientific Writing* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1993)

Melis, Antonio, 'Calvino y la literatura hispanoamericana: el paradigma rioplatense y el paradigma andino', in *Borges, Calvino, la literatura*, ed. by Alain Sicard and Fernando Moreno, 2 vols (Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos, 1996), ii, 39-48

Mendelson, Edward, 'Encyclopedic Narrative: From Dante to Pynchon', *Modern Language Notes*, 91 (1976), 1267-275

Mendieta, Eduardo, and Pedro Lange-Churión, 'Philsophy and Literature: The Latin American Case', *Dissens*, 2 (1996), 31-44

Mengaldo, Pier Vicenzo, 'L'arco e le pietre (Calvino, *Le città invisibili*)', in his *La tradizione del Novecento: da D'Annunzio a Montale* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1975), 406-26

Menocal, Maria Rosa, *Writing in Dante's Cult of Truth: from Borges to Boccaccio* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991)

Menton, Seymour, 'Jorge Luis Borges, Magic Realist', *Hispanic Review*, 50 (1982), 411-426

Merquoir, José Guilherme, *Foucault*, 2nd edn (London: Fontana, 1991; first publ. 1985)

Merrell, Floyd, *Unthinking Thinking: Jorge Luis Borges, Mathematics, and the New Physics* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1991)

Merrell, Floyd, 'The Writing of Forking Paths: Borges, Calvino and Postmodern Models of Writing', *Variaciones Borges*, 3 (1997), 56-68

Merrell, Floyd, 'Borges y Calvino: ¿Caosmos desenmarañado?', in *Jorge Luis Borges: pensamiento y saber en el siglo XX*, ed. by Alfonso de Toro and Fernando de Toro (Frankfurt: Vervuert, 1999), 189-221

Merrell, Floyd, 'Some Thoughts on Simplicity and Complexity by Way of Jorge Luis Borges, Italo Calvino, and C. S. Peirce', in *El siglo de Borges: retrospectiva – presente – futuro*, ed. by Alfonso de Toro and Fernando de Toro (Frankfurt: Vervuert, 1999), 129-53

Merrell, Floyd, *Tasking Textuality* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2000)

Mignolo, Walter, and Jorge Aguilar Mora, 'Borges, el libro y la escritura', *Caravelle*, 17 (1971), 187-94

Mignolo, Walter, 'Emergencia, espacio, 'mundos posibles': las propuestas epistemológicas de Jorge L. Borges', *Revista Iberoamericana*, 100-101 (1977), 357-79

Milanini, Claudio, 'Natura e storia nel *Sentiero* di Calvino', *Belfagor*, 40 (1985), 529-46

Milanini, Claudio, 'L'editore di se medesimo', in *Italo Calvino: A Writer for the Next Millennium*, ed. by Giorgio Bertone (Alexandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 1998), 67-77

Milano, Laura, and Rosa María Ravera, 'El barroquismo borgeano', in *Jorge Luis Borges: pensamiento y saber en el siglo XX*, ed. by Alfonso de Toro and Fernando de Toro (Frankfurt: Vervuert, 1999), 321-45

Millán-Zaibert, Elizabeth, 'A Method for the New Millennium: Calvino and Irony', in *Literary Philosophers: Borges, Calvino, Eco*, ed. by Jorge J. E. Gracia, Carolyn Korsmeyer, and Rodolphe Gasché (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), 129-48

Miller, J. Hillis, 'Figure in Borges's 'Death and the Compass': Red Scharlach as Hermeneut', *Dieciocho*, 10 (1987), 53-61

Miller, J. Hillis, 'Narrative', in *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, ed. by Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin, 2nd edn (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995; first publ. 1990), 66-79

Miotti de Roset, Marta B., 'Aproximación a 'La muerte y la brújula'', *Letras*, 2 (1981), 95-98

Mirollo, James V., *The Poet of the Marvellous: Giambattista Marino* (New York and London: Columbia University, 1963)

Mitchell, W. J. T., 'Spatial Form in Literature: Toward a General Theory', *Critical Inquiry*, 6 (1980), 539-67

Mitchell, W. J. T., ed., *On Narrative* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1981)

Mitchell, W. J. T., 'Representation', in *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, ed. by Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin, 2nd edn (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995; first publ. 1990), 11-22

Molesworth, Charles, 'The City: Some Classical Moments', in *City Images: Perspectives from Literature, Philosophy, and Film*, ed. by Mary Ann Caws (New York, Philadelphia, and London: Gordon and Breach, 1991), 13-23

Molloy, Sylvia, ''Dios acecha en los intervalos': simulacro y causalidad textual en la ficción de Borges', *Revista Iberoamericana*, 100-101 (1977), 381-98

Molloy, Sylvia, *Signs of Borges*, trans. by Oscar Montero and Sylvia Molloy (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1994)

Molloy, Sylvia, 'Lost in Translation: Borges, the Western Tradition and Fictions of Latin America', in *Borges and Europe Revisited*, ed. by Evelyn Fishburn (London: Institute of Latin American Studies, University of London, 1998), 8-20

Molloy, Sylvia, *Las letras de Borges y otros ensayos*, 2nd edn (Buenos Aires: Beatriz Viterbo, 1999)

Molloy, Sylvia, '*Flâneries* textuales: Borges, Benjamin y Baudelaire', in her *Las letras de Borges y otros ensayos* (Buenos Aires: Beatriz Viterbo, 1999), 191-207

Molloy, Sylvia, 'Traducir a Borges', in *Borges: desesperaciones aparentes y consuelos secretos*, ed. by Rafael Olea Franco (Mexico: El Colegio de México, 1999), 273-83

Mondada, Lorenza, 'Scrittura del sapere e dello spazio: testo calviniano e discorso geografico', in *Italo Calvino: A Writer for the Next Millennium*, ed. by Giorgio Bertone (Alexandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 1998), 255-68

Montaldo, Graciela, 'Borges: una vanguardia criolla', in *Historia social de la literatura argentina*, ed. by David Viñas, 14 vols (Buenos Aires: Contrapunto, 1989), III, 213-32

Montella, Luigi, *Italo Calvino: Il percorso dei linguaggi* (Salerno: Edisud, 1996)

Moreiras, Alberto, 'Pastiche Identity, and Allegory of Allegory', in *Latin American Identity and Constructions of Difference*, ed. by Amaryll Chanady (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 204-38

Morin, Edgar, 'Beyond Determinism: The Dialogue of Order and Disorder', trans. by Frank Coppay, *SubStance*, 40 (1983), 22-35

Mosca, Stefania, *Jorge Luis Borges: utopía y realidad* (Caracas: Monte Avila 1983)

Mosconi, Cecilia Laura, 'El ensayo como espacio abierto a la ficción', in *Borges en 10 miradas*, ed. by Osvaldo Ferrari and others (Buenos Aires: Fundación El Libro, 1999), 147-58

Most, Glenn W., and William W. Stowe, *The Poetics of Murder* (San Diego, New York, and London: Harcourt, 1983)

Motte, Warren F., 'Calvino's Combinatorics', *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 6.2 (1986), 81-87

Moulin-Civil, Françoise, '*Siete noches* per el prossimo millenio: oratoria y escritura en Borges y Calvino', in *Borges, Calvino, la literatura*, ed. by Alain Sicard and Fernando Moreno, 2 vols (Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos, 1996), ii, 223-33

Muecke, D. C., *Irony and the Ironic*, 2nd edn (London and New York: Methuen, 1982; first publ. 1970)

Murillo, L. A., 'The Labyrinths of Jorge Luis Borges: An Introductory to the Stories of *The Aleph*', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 20 (1959), 259-66

Musarra-Schroeder, Ulla, *Il labirinto e la rete: percorsi moderni e postmoderni nell'opera di Italo Calvino* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1996)

Napolitani, Pier Daniele, 'Il libro e la storia', in *Narratori dell'invisibile: simposio in memoria di Italo Calvino*, ed. by Beppe Cottafavi and Maurizio Magri (Modena: Mucchi, 1987), 41-49

Nash, Cristopher, ed., *Narrative in Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990)

Nash, Cristopher, 'Slaughtering the Subject: Literature's Assault on Narrative', in *Narrative in Culture*, ed. by Cristopher Nash (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 199-218

Nava, Giuseppe, 'La geografia di Italo Calvino', *Paragone*, 38.446 (1987), 21-39

Nava, Giuseppe, 'Calvino e il fantastico', *Paragone*, 42.502 (1991), 49-64

Nava, Giuseppe, 'Calvino interprete di Borges', in *Borges, Calvino, la literatura*, ed. by Alain Sicard and Fernando Moreno, 2 vols (Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos, 1996), i, 67-77

Nichols, Jr., Stephen, and Richard B. Vowles, eds, *Comparatists at Work: Studies in Comparative Literature* (Waltham, Massachusetts: Blaisdell, 1968)

Nocentini, Claudia, 'Narrative and Ideological Function of the Narrator in *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno*', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 33 (1997), 369-75

Nocentini, Claudia, *Italo Calvino and the Landscape of Childhood* (Leeds: Northern Universities Press, 2000)

Núñez-Faraco, Humberto, 'In Search of the Aleph: Memory, Truth, and Falsehood in Borges's Poetics', *Modern Language Review*, 92 (1997), 613-29

O'Murchadha, Felix, 'Nature as Other: A Hermeneutic Approach to Science', in *Continental and Postmodern Perspectives in the Philosophy of Science*, ed. by Babette E. Babich, Debra B. Bergoffen, and Simon V. Glynn (Aldershot: Avebury, 1995), 189-203

O'Neill, Patrick, *Fictions of Discourse: Reading Narrative Theory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994)

O'Sullivan, Gerry, 'The Library Is on Fire: Intertextuality in Borges and Foucault', in *Borges and his Successors: The Borgesian Impact on Literature and the Arts*, ed. by Edna Aizenberg (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1990), 109-21

Olby, R. C., and others, eds, *Companion to the History of Modern Science* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990)

Olds, Marshall C., 'Another Book, Another Author: Calvino, Flaubert, Mallarmé', *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 6.2 (1986), 117-23

Olea Franco, Rafael, ed., *Borges: desesperaciones aparentes y consuelos secretos* (Mexico: El Colegio de México, Centro de Estudios Lingüísticos y Literarios, 1999)

Oliverio, Alberto, 'L'opera di Italo Calvino alla luce delle 'due culture'', in *Italo Calvino: la letteratura, la scienza, la città*, ed. by Giorgio Bertone (Genoa: Marietti, 1988), 82-88

Olken, I. T., *With Pleated Eye and Garnet Wing: Symmetries of Italo Calvino* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1984)

Olken, I. T., '*Spira Mirabilis*: Italo Calvino's Progressionary Paradigms', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 49 (1988), 142-72

Ortega, Julio, *La contemplación y la fiesta: notas sobre la novela latinoamericana actual* (Caracas: Monte Avila, 1979)

Ortiz, Eduardo L., 'The Transmission of Science from Europe to Argentina and its Impact on Literature: From Lugones to Borges', in *Borges and Europe Revisited*, ed. by Evelyn Fishburn (London: Institute of Latin American Studies, University of London, 1998), 108-23

Ousby, Ian, *The Crime and Mystery Book: A Reader's Companion* (Hong Kong: Thames and Hudson, 1997)

Oviedo, Antonio, 'Borges y el arte del precursor', *Mundi*, 10 (1992), 37-45

Oviedo, José Miguel, 'Borges: el poeta según sus prologos', *Revista Iberoamericana*, 130-131 (1985), 209-20

Ostergård, Svend, 'The Unconscious of Representation ('Death and the Compass')', *Variaciones Borges*, 1 (1996), 101-12

Palmer, Richard E., *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1969)

Palmer, Richard E., 'Postmodernity and Hermeneutics', *Boundary 2*, 5 (1977), 363-93

Palmore, Michael J., 'Diagramming Calvino's Architecture', *Forum Italicum*, 24 (1990), 25-39

Panesi, Jorge, *Críticas* (Buenos Aires: Norma, 2000)

Paoli, Roberto, 'La literatura según Borges', *Boletín de la Academia Argentina de Letras*, 203-204 (1987), 147-60

Paoli, Roberto, 'Borges y la literatura inglesa', *Revista Iberoamericana*, 140 (1987), 595-614

Paoli, Roberto, *Presencia de Borges en la literatura italiana contemporánea* (Mendoza: Universidad Nacional de Cuyo, 1994)

Paoli, Roberto, 'Borges y Calvino', in *Borges, Calvino, la literatura*, ed. by Alain Sicard and Fernando Moreno, 2 vols (Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos, 1996), i, 41-56

Parodi, Cristina, 'Borges y la subversión del modelo policial', in *Borges: desesperaciones aparentes y consuelos secretos*, ed. by Rafael Olea Franco (Mexico: El Colegio de México, 1999), 77-97

Pasolini, Pier Paolo, *Descrizioni di descrizioni*, ed. by Graziella Chiarcossi (Turin: Einaudi, 1979)

Pastormerlo, Sergio, 'Borges crítico', *Variaciones Borges*, 3 (1997), 6-16

Paul, Alan, *El sitio de Macondo y el eje Toronto-Buenos Aires* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1982)

Paulicelli, Eugenia, *Parola e immagine: Sentieri della scrittura in Leonardo, Marino, Foscolo, Calvino* (Fiesole, Florence: Cadmo, 1996)

Paulicelli, Eugenia, 'Dalla città invisibile alla città futura. Italo Calvino: storia, impegno, linguaggio', *The Italianist*, 16 (1996), 143-60

Paulson, William, *The Noise of Culture: Literary Texts in a World of Information* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988)

Paulson, William, 'Computers, Minds, and Texts: Preliminary Reflections', *New Literary History*, 20 (1989), 291-303

Paulson, William, 'Literature, Complexity, Interdisciplinarity', in *Chaos and Order: Complex Dynamics in Literature and Science*, ed. by N. Katherine Hayles (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 37-53

Paulson, William, 'Chance, Complexity, and Narrative Explanation', *SubStance*, 74 (1994), 5-21

Payne, Michael, *Reading Knowledge: An Introduction to Barthes, Foucault and Althusser* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997)

Paz, Octavio, *Corriente alterna*, 5th edn (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno, 1971)

Paz, Octavio, 'Translation: Literature and Letters', trans. by Irene del Corral, in *Theories of Translation: An Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida*, ed. by Rainer Schulte and John Biguenets (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 152-62

Pedriali, Federica G., ''Più per paura che per gioco?': Three Textual Explorations of Calvino's *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno*', *Modern Language Review*, 93 (1998), 59-70

Peicovich, Esteban, *Borges palabrista* (Madrid: Letra Viva, 1980)

Penna, Rosa E. M. D., 'Borges, Coleridge y los espacios soñados', *Actas de segundas jornadas internacionales de literatura argentina - comparatística* (Buenos Aires: Facultad de Letras y Filosofía, Universidad de Buenos Aires, 1998), 53-60

Pérez, Alberto Julián, *Modernismo, vanguardias, posmodernidad: ensayos de literatura hispanoamericana* (Buenos Aires: Corregidor, 1995)

Perilli, Carmen, 'Mitologías de Borges. La seducción de las máscaras', *Boletín de la Academia Argentina de Letras*, 247-248 (1998), 149-62

Perrella, Silvio, *Calvino* (Rome: Laterza, 1999)

Pescio Bottino, Germana, *Calvino* (Florence: Il Castoro, 1967)

Peyre, Henri, 'A Glance at Comparative Literature in America', *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature*, 1 (1952), 1-8

Peyre, Henri, 'Seventy-Five Years of Comparative Literature: A Backward and a Forward Glance', *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature*, 8 (1959), 18-26

Pezzoni, Enrique, *Enrique Pezzoni: lector de Borges*, ed. by Annick Louis (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1999)

Phillips, Allen W., ''El sur' de Borges', *Revista Hispanica Moderna*, 29 (1963), 140-47
Pickenhayn, Jorge Oscar, *Borges: álgebra y fuego: vida y obra del gran escritor argentino* (Buenos Aires: Editorial del Belgrano, 1982)
Pierangeli, Fabio, *Italo Calvino: la metamorfosi e l'idea del nulla* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino Editore, 1997)
Pierantoni, Ruggero, 'Metafore di una mappa', in *Italo Calvino: la letteratura, la scienza, la città*, ed. by Giorgio Bertone (Genoa: Marietti, 1988), 89-93
Pierce, Constance, 'Calvino on Photography', *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 6.2 (1986), 130-37
Piglia, Ricardo, 'Ideología y ficción en Borges', in *Borges y la crítica*, ed. by Jaime Rest (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1981), 87-95
Piglia, Ricardo, 'Los usos de Borges', *Variaciones Borges*, 3 (1997), 17-27
Pilz, Kerstin, 'Complexity: A Paradigm for 'One Culture'?', *Forum Italicum*, 31 (1997), 423-37
Pilz, Kerstin, 'L'ipertesto: genere letterario marginale o emergente? Un indagine sugli ipertesti di Italo Calvino', *Forum Italicum*, 35 (2001), 473-83
Pilz, Kerstin, 'Reconceptualising Thought and Space: Labyrinths and Cities in Calvino's Fictions', *Italica*, 80 (2003), 229-42
Piranesi, Giovanni Battista, *The Complete Etchings*, ed. by Luigi Ficacci (Cologne: Taschen, 2000)
Pitkin, Hanna Fenichel, *The Concept of Representation* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967)
Planells, Antonio, 'El centro de los laberintos de Borges', *Revista Interamericana de Bibliografía*, 1 (1992), 102-20
Poe, Edgar Allan, 'The Mystery of Marie Rogêt', in *The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. by James A. Harrison (New York: AMS, 1965), v (1965), 1-66
Poe, Edgar Allan, *The Fall of the House of Usher and Other Writings*, ed. by David Galloway (London: Penguin, 1986)
Poirier, Richard, 'The Politics of Self-Parody', in *Critical Essays on Jorge Luis Borges*, ed. by Jaime Alazraki (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1987), 96-108
Ponti, Annalisa, *Come leggere 'Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno' di Italo Calvino* (Milan: Mursia, 1991)
Popper, Karl R., 'The Arrow of Time', *Nature*, 177 (1956), 538
Porush, David, *The Soft Machine: Cybernetic Fiction* (New York and London: Methuen, 1985)
Porush, David, 'Cybernetic Fiction and Postmodern Science', *New Literary History*, 20 (1989), 373-96
Porush, David, 'Fictions as Dissipative Structures: Prigogine's Theory and Postmodernism's Roadshow', in *Chaos and Order: Complex Dynamics in Literature and Science*, ed. by N. Katherine Hayles (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 54-84
Posnett, H. M., 'The Comparative Method and Literature', *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature*, 14 (1965), 65-71
Poundstone, William, *Labyrinths of Reason: Paradox, Puzzles and the Frailty of Knowledge* (London: Penguin, 1988)
Prawer, S. S., *Comparative Literary Studies: An Introduction* (London: Duckworth, 1973)
Prigogine, Ilya, 'Law, History ... and Desertion', trans. by Mark Andrews, *SubStance*, 40 (1983), 36-42
Prigogine, Ilya, and Isabelle Stengers, *Order Out of Chaos: Man's New Dialogue with Nature* (London: Flamingo, 1985)
Pritchett, V. S., *The Myth Makers: Essays on European, Russian and South American Novelists* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1979)

Pucciarelli, Eugenio, 'Borges y los rostros del tiempo', *Mundi*, 5 (1989), 26-51
Puletti, Ruggero, *Un millenarismo improbabile: le 'Lezioni americane' di Italo Calvino* (Rome: Lucarini, 1991)
Pullini, Giorgio, *Volti e risvolti del romanzo italiano contemporaneo*, 2nd edn (Milan: Mursia, 1974; first publ. 1971)
Putnam, Hilary, 'Literature, Science, and Reflection', *New Literary History*, 7 (1976), 483-91
Putnam, Hilary, 'The Craving for Objectivity', *New Literary History*, 15 (1984), 229-39
Quinones, Ricardo J., *Mapping Literary Modernism: Time and Development* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985)
Raffestin, Claude, 'Tra letteratura e scienza. Calvino o l'analista della territorialità', in *Italo Calvino: A Writer for the Next Millennium*, ed. by Giorgio Bertone (Alexandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 1998), 269-78
Rank, Otto, *The Double: A Psychoanalytic Study*, ed. and trans. by Harry Tucker, Jr. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1971)
Rankin, Ian, 'The Role of the Reader in Italo Calvino's *If on a winter's night a traveller*', *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 6.2 (1986), 124-29
Rapaport, Herman, 'Borges, De Man, and the Deconstruction of Reading', in *Borges and his Successors: The Borgesian Impact on Literature and the Arts*, ed. by Edna Aizenberg (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1990), 139-54
Rasch, William, 'Injecting Noise into the System: Hermeneutics and the Necessity of Misunderstanding', *SubStance*, 67 (1992), 61-76
Rasi, Humberto M., 'Borges in Search of the Fatherland', in *Simply a Man of Letters*, ed. by Carlos Cortinez (Orono, Maine: University of Maine at Orono Press, 1982), 165-73
Ravera, Rosa María, 'Aspectos postmodernos (y también modernos) de la narrativa de Borges', in *El siglo de Borges: retrospectiva – presente – futuro*, ed. by Alfonso de Toro and Fernando de Toro (Frankfurt: Vervuert, 1999), 273-89
Ray, Robert B., 'Postmodernism', in *Encyclopedia of Literature and Criticism*, ed. by Martin Coyle and others (London: Routledge, 1990), 131-47
Re, Lucia, *Calvino and the Age of Neorealism* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1990)
Re, Lucia, 'Calvino and the Value of Literature', *Modern Language Notes*, 113 (1998), 121-37
Redekop, Ernest H., 'Labyrinths in Time and Space', *Mosaic*, 13 (1980), 95-113
Rehder, Wulf D., 'Italo Calvino's 'Sixth Memo for the Next Millennium'', *Forum Italicum*, 32 (1998), 556-74
Reiss, Timothy J., 'Introduction: The World/World Equation', *Yale French Studies*, 49 (1973), 3-12
Remak, Henry H. H., 'Comparative Literature at the Crossroads: Diagnosis, Therapy, and Prognosis', *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature*, 9 (1960), 1-28
Repetto, Elsa, *Relato y sociedad: realidad y fantasmas en el relato borgeano* (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1994)
Rest, Jaime, *El laberinto del universo: Borges y el pensamiento nominalista* (Buenos Aires: Fausto, 1976)
Revol, Enrique Luis, *La tradición imaginaria* (Buenos Aires: TEUCO, 1971)
Rey, Elisa, 'El héroe, el traidor y el laberinto: a propósito de 'El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan'', *Logos*, 16 (1980-1981), 207-13
Reyes, Alfonso, 'El argentino Jorge Luis Borges', in *Jorge Luis Borges*, ed. by Jaime Alazraki (Madrid: Taurus, 1976), 61-63

Ricci, Franco, 'The Recovery of Mnemonic Meaning in *L'entrata in guerra*', *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 6.2 (1986), 31-37
Ricci, Franco, ed., *Calvino Revisited* (Ottawa: Dovehouse Editions, 1989)
Ricci, Franco, 'The Quest for Sonship in *Le città invisibili* and 'La strada di San Giovanni' by Italo Calvino', *Forum Italicum*, 29 (1995), 52-75
Ricci, Franco, 'Uscite dal mondo', in *Borges, Calvino, la literatura*, 2 vols (Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos, 1996), i, 263-70
Ricci, Franco, 'De Chirico City: Calvinian Ambulations', *Modern Language Review*, 91 (1996), 78-93
Ricci, Franco, *Painting with Words, Writing with Pictures: Word and Image in the Work of Italo Calvino* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001)
Ricci, Graziella N., 'Borges y la reiteración de lo infinito (Análisis intralingüístico de 'La casa de Asterión')', in *Borges, Calvino, la literatura*, ed. by Alain Sicard and Fernando Moreno, 2 vols (Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos, 1996), ii, 169-169-207
Ricoeur, Paul, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation*, ed. by John B. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981)
Ridley, B. K., *On Science* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001)
Riffaterre, Michael, 'Interpretation and Undecidability', *New Literary History*, 12 (1980), 227-42
Riffaterre, Michael, 'Intertextual Representation: On Mimesis as Interpretive Discourse', *Critical Inquiry*, 11 (1984), 141-62
Riffaterre, Michael, 'Undecidability as Hermeneutic Constraint', in *Literary Theory Today*, ed. by Peter Collier and Helga Geyer-Ryan (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), 109-24
Rimmon-Kenan, Shlomith, 'Doubles and Counterparts: Patterns of Interchangeability in Borges' 'The Garden of Forking Paths'', *Critical Inquiry*, 6 (1980), 639-47
Rock, David, *Argentina 1516-1987: From Spanish Colonization to Alfonsín*, rev edn (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1987; first publ. 1985)
Rodríguez Monegal, Emir, 'Jorge Luis Borges y la literatura fantástica', *Número*, 5 (1949), 448-55
Rodríguez Monegal, Emir, 'Borges: teoría y practica', *Número*, 27 (1955), 124-57
Rodríguez Monegal, Emir, 'Borges y Nouvelle Critique', *Revista Iberoamericana*, 80 (1972), 367-90
Rodríguez Monegal, Emir, 'Symbols in Borges' Work', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 3 (1973), 325-40
Rodríguez Monegal, Emir, 'Borges: una teoría de la literatura fantástica', *Revista Iberoamericana*, 95 (1976), 177-89
Rodríguez Monegal, Emir, 'Borges y la política', *Revista Iberoamericana*, 100-101 (1977), 269-91
Rodríguez Monegal, Emir, 'Borges, lector del barroco español', *XVII Congreso del Instituto Internacional de Literatura Iberoamericana*, 3 vols (Madrid: Centro Iberoamericano de Cooperación, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 1978), I, 453-69
Rodríguez Monegal, Emir, 'Borges: The Intellectual Background', in *Simply a Man of Letters*, ed. by Carlos Cortinez (Orono, Maine: University of Maine at Orono Press, 1982),175-90
Rodríguez Monegal, Emir, *Jorge Luis Borges: A Literary Biography* (New York: Paragon House, 1988)
Rodríguez Monegal, Emir, 'Borges and Derrida: Apothecaries', trans. by Paul Budofsky and Edna Aizenberg, in *Borges and his Successors: The Borgesian Impact on*

Literature and the Arts, ed. by Edna Aizenberg (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1990), 128-38

Roe, Frederick C., 'Comparative Literature in the United Kingdom', *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature*, 3 (1954), 1-12

Roffé, Reina, *Espejo de escritores: entrevistas con Borges, Cortázar, Fuentes, Goytisolo, Onetti, Puig, Rama, Rulfo, Sánchez, Vargas Llosa* (Hanover: Ediciones del Norte, 1985)

Rojo, Alberto G., 'El jardín de los mundos que se ramifican: Borges y la mecánica cuántica', in *Borges en 10 miradas*, ed. by Osvaldo Ferrari and others (Buenos Aires: Fundación El Libro, 1999), 185-98

Rollason, Christopher, 'The Detective Myth in Edgar Allan Poe's Dupin Trilogy', in *Two Centuries of Detective Fiction: A New Comparative Approach*, ed. by Maurizio Ascari (Bologna: University of Bologna, 2000), 57-75

Romero, José Luis, *Breve historia de la Argentina*, 4th edn (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica de Argentina, 1997; first publ. 1965)

Rosa, Nicolás, 'Borges o la ficción laberíntica', in *Nueva novela latinoamericana*, ed. by Jorge Lafforgue, 2 vols (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 1974), ii, 140-73

Rosa, William, 'Las posibilidades del dos básico en 'El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan'', *Revista Iberoamericana*, 155-156 (1991), 597-606

Rose, Margaret A., *Parody//Meta-fiction: An Analysis of Parody as a Critical Mirror to the Writing and Reception of Fiction* (London: Croom Helm, 1979)

Rose, Margaret A., *Parody: Ancient, Modern, and Post-Modern* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993)

Rosenblatt, Roger, 'The Age of Einstein', *Time*, 31 December 1999, 58-59

Rosenblum, Joseph, ''The Immortal': Jorge Luis Borges' Rendition of T. S. Eliot's 'The Waste Land'', *Studies in Short Fiction*, 18 (1981), 183-86

Rosengarten, Frank, 'The Italian Resistance Novel (1945-1962)', in *From Verismo to Experimentalism: Essays on the Modern Italian Novel*, ed. by Sergio Pacifici (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1969), 212-38

Ross, Stephen David, *The Ring of Representation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992)

Rovira, José Carlos, 'Borges, Calvino y la fundación literaria de ciudades', in *Borges, Calvino, la literatura*, ed. by Alain Sicard and Fernando Moreno, 2 vols (Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos, 1996), ii, 85-97

Rowe, William, 'How European is it?', in *Borges and Europe Revisited*, ed. by Evelyn Fishburn (London: Institute of Latin American Studies, University of London, 1998), 21-36

Ruelle, David, *Chance and Chaos* (London: Penguin, 1993; first publ. 1991)

Ruibal, Raúl, 'Creación de laberintos: ¿confusión de caminos? A propósito de Jorge Luis Borges y la filosofía', in *Borges y la filosofía*, ed. by Gregorio Kaminsky (Buenos Aires: Instituto de Filosofía, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Universidad de Buenos Aires, 1994), 171-79

Ruiz, Horacio Eduardo, 'Más allá de la intertextualidad: Borges y el hipertexto', *Actas de Segundas Jornadas Internacionales de Literatura Argentina - Comparatística* (Buenos Aires: Facultad de Letras y Filosofía, Universidad de Buenos Aires, 1998), 61-66

Running, Thorpe, *The Critical Poem: Borges, Paz, and Other Language-Centered Poets in Latin America* (Lewisburg, London, Cranbury and NJ: Bucknell University Press and Associated University Press, 1996)

Rushing, Robert A., 'Il cristallo e il mare: l'*enumeración caótica* e l'epistemologia in Calvino e Gadda', *Forum Italicum*, 31 (1997), 407-22

Russell, Charles, 'The Vault of Language: Self-Reflective Artifice in Contemporary American Fiction', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 20 (1974), 349-59

Sábato, Ernesto, 'Los relatos de Jorge Luis Borges', in *Jorge Luis Borges*, ed. by Jaime Alazraki (Madrid: Taurus, 1976), 69-74

Salas, Horacio, *Borges: una biografía* (Buenos Aires: Planeta, 1994)

Santarcangeli, Paolo, *Il libro dei labirinti: storia di un mito e di un simbolo* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1967)

Santos Unamuno, Enrique, 'Jorge Luis Borges e Italo Calvino: de la modernidad libresca a la hipertextualidad posmoderna', *Insula*, 631-632 (1999), 32-34

Sarap, Madan, *An Introductory Guide to Post-Structuralism and Postmodernism*, 2nd edn (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993; first publ. 1988)

Sarlo, Beatriz, *Una modernidad periférica: Buenos Aires 1920-1930* (Buenos Aires: Nueva Visión, 1988)

Sarlo, Beatriz, *Jorge Luis Borges: A Writer on the Edge*, ed. by John King (London: Verso, 1993)

Sarlo, Beatriz, 'Borges, un fantasma que atreviesa la crítica', *Variaciones Borges*, 3 (1997), 35-45

Sarlo, Beatriz, 'El saber del cuerpo. A propósito de 'Emma Zunz'', *Variaciones Borges*, 7 (1999), 231-47

Sarlo, Beatriz, 'Borges: crítica y teoría cultural', in *Jorge Luis Borges: pensamiento y saber en el siglo XX*, ed. by Alfonso de Toro and Fernando de Toro (Frankfurt: Vervuert, 1999), 259-71

Sarlo, Beatriz, 'Un mundo de pasiones', in *Borges: desesperaciones aparentes y consuelos secretos*, ed. by Rafael Olea Franco (Mexico: El Colegio de México, 1999), 207-24

Sassower, Raphael, 'Prolegomena to Postmodern Philosophy of Science', in *Continental and Postmodern Perspectives in the Philosophy of Science*, ed. by Babette E. Babich, Debra B. Bergoffen, and Simon V. Glynn (Aldershot: Avebury, 1995), 13-30

Sayce, R. A., 'Comparative Literature', *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature*, 63-5

Sbragia, Albert, 'Italo Calvino's Ordering of Chaos', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 39 (1993), 283-306

Scalise, Gregorio, 'The Game of Palomar', trans. by Francesco Guardiani, *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 6.2 (1986), 138-45

Scarpa, Domenico, *Italo Calvino* (Milan: Mondadori, 1999)

Scheglov, Yu. K., 'Towards a Description of Detective Story Structure', trans. L. M. O'Toole, in *Generating the Literary Text*, ed. by L. M. O'Toole, Russian Poetics in Translation, 1 (n.p.: n. pub., n.d.), 51-77

Schilpp, Paul Arthur, ed., *Albert Einstein: Philosopher-Scientist*, 3rd edn (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1970; first publ. 1949)

Schkolnik, Samuel, 'El mundo según Borges', in *Borges en 10 miradas*, ed. by Osvaldo Ferrari and others (Buenos Aires: Fundación El Libro, 1999), 199-209

Schneider, Marilyn, 'Calvino at a Crossroads: *Il castello dei destini incrociati*', *PMLA*, 95 (1980), 73-90

Scholes, Robert, and Robert Kellogg, *The Nature of Narrative* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966)

Scholes, Robert, 'Language, Narrative, and Anti-Narrative', in *On Narrative*, ed. by W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 200-8

Scholes, Robert, 'The Reality of Borges', in *Critical Essays on Jorge Luis Borges*, ed. by Jaime Alazraki (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1987), 130-39

Scholz, László, 'La metáfora del ajedrez en Borges y Calvino', in *Borges, Calvino, la literatura*, ed. by Alain Sicard and Fernando Moreno, 2 vols (Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos, 1996), i, 119-29

Schorske, Carl E., 'The Idea of the City in European Thought: Voltaire to Spengler', in *The Historian and the City*, ed. by Oscar Handlin and John Burchard (Massachusetts: MIT Press and Harvard University Press, 1963), 95-114

Schulz, Hans-Joachim, and Phillip H. Rhein, eds, *Comparative Literature: The Early Years* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1973)

Sicard, Alain, and Fernando Moreno, *Borges, Calvino, la literatura*, 2 vols (Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos, 1996)

Sebreli, Juan José, 'Borges: nihilismo y literatura', *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos*, 565-566 (1997), 91-126

Segre, Cesare, 'Se una notte d'inverno un romanziere sognasse un aleph di dieci colori', in *Teatro e romanzo* (Torino: Einaudi, 1984), 135-73

Seroni, Adriano, *Esperimenti critici sul novecento letterario* (Milan: Mursia, 1967)

Serra, Francesca, *Calvino e il pulviscolo di Palomar* (Florence: Le Lettere, 1996)

Serrano, Carlos, 'Duplicaciones y duplicidades: Unamuno autor de *Pierre Ménard*', in *Borges, Calvino, la literatura*, ed. by Alain Sicard and Fernando Moreno, 2 vols (Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos, 1996), i, 145-53

Serres, Michel, *Hermes: Literature, Science, Philosophy*, ed. by Josué V. Harari and David F. Bell (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982)

Serres, Michel, 'Noise', trans. by Lawrence R. Schehr, *SubStance*, 40 (1983), 48-60

Serres, Michel, 'Literature and the Exact Sciences', *SubStance*, 59 (1989), 3-34

Shannon, Claude E., and Warren Weaver, *The Mathematical Theory of Communication* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971)

Shaw, Donald Leslie, *Borges Ficciones* (Valencia: Grant & Cutler and Tamesis Books, 1976)

Shaw, Donald Leslie, 'Jorge Luis Borges: *Ficciones*', in *Landmarks in Modern Latin American Fiction*, ed. by Philip Swanson (London: Routledge, 1990), 27-49

Shaw, Donald Leslie, *Borges' Narrative Strategy* (Leeds: Francis Cairns, 1992)

Shields, Rob, 'Fancy Footwork: Walter Benjamin's Notes on *Flânerie*', in *The Flâneur*, ed. by Keith Tester (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 61-80

Silverman, Hugh J., *Textualities: Between Hermeneutics and Deconstruction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994)

Simmel, Georg, 'The Metropolis and Mental Life', trans. by Edward Shils, in *On Individuality and Social Forms*, ed. by Donald N. Levine (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1971)

Smith, Barbara Herrnstein, 'Narrative Versions, Narrative Theories', in *On Narrative*, ed. by W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 209-32

Smith, Peter, *Explaining Chaos* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)

Snow, C. P., *The Two Cultures: A Second Look* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969)

Sontag, Susan, *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1967)

Sontag, Susan, *Styles of Radical Will* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1969)

Sorice, Michele, *La città ideale: Italo Calvino dal 'pessimismo dell'intelligenza' all'intelligenza dell'utopia* (Rome: Merlo, 1990)

Sosnowski, Saúl, *Borges y la cábala: la búsqueda del verbo* (Buenos Aires: Pardes, 1986)

Spanos, William, 'The Detective and the Boundary: Some Notes on the Postmodern Literary Imagination', *Boundary 2*, 2 (1972), 147-68

Speretti-Piñero, Emma Susana, 'The Rose in Borges' Work', in *Simply a Man of Letters*, ed. by Carlos Cortinez (Orono, Maine: University of Maine at Orono Press, 1982), 191-98

Stabb, Martin S., *Jorge Luis Borges* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1970)
Stachel, John, 'The Theory of Relativity', in *Companion to the History of Modern Science*, ed. by R. C. Olby and others (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 442-57
Stallknecht, N. P., ed., *Comparative Literature: Method and Perspective* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1961)
Standish, Peter, 'Borges and the Limits of Language', *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispanicos*, 16 (1991), 136-42
Stavans, Ilan, 'Emma Zunz: The Jewish Theodicy of Jorge Luis Borges', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 3 (1986), 469-75
Stavans, Ilan, 'Borges and the Future', *Science-Fiction Studies*, 17 (1990), 77-83
Stavans, Ilan, 'The English Borges', *The Times Literary Supplement*, 29 January 1999, 24
Steele, Peter, '*Scriptor Ludens*: The Notion and Some Instances', *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, 12 (1985), 235-63
Steele, Timothy, 'The Structure of the Detective Story: Classical or Modern?', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 27 (1981-1982), 555-70
Steinberg, Leo, 'Art and Science: Do They Need to Be Yoked?', *Daedalus*, 115.3 (1986), 1-16
Steiner, George, *Language and Silence* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969; first publ. 1967)
Steiner, George, 'Los tigres en el espejo', trans. by Francisco Rivera, in *Jorge Luis Borges*, ed. by Jaime Alazraki (Madrid: Taurus, 1976), 237-47
Steiner, George, 'Tigers in the Mirror', in *Critical Essays on Jorge Luis Borges*, ed. by Jaime Alazraki (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1987), 116-24
Steiner, George, 'What Is Comparative Literature?', in his *No Passion Spent: Essays 1978-1996* (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1996), 142-59
Stephens, Cynthia, 'Conflicting Interpretation of Language and Reality in Borges's Narrative', *Modern Language Review*, 85 (1990), 65-76
Stephens, Joanna, 'Calvino, Borges y Flaubert', in *Borges, Calvino, la literatura*, ed. by Alain Sicard and Fernando Moreno, 2 vols (Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos, 1996), ii, 151-68
Stephens, Michael, 'Italo Calvino: A Woman, a Moon, the City', *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 6.2 (1986), 62-70
Stevenson, Randall, *Modernist Fiction: An Introduction*, rev edn (Harlow: Prentice Hall, 1998; first publ. 1992)
Stewart, Ian, *Does God Play Dice? The New Mathematics of Chaos*, 2nd edn (London: Penguin, 1997; first publ. 1989)
Stoicheff, Peter, 'The Chaos of Metafiction', in *Chaos and Order: Complex Dynamics in Literature and Science*, ed. by N. Katherine Hayles (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 85-99
Stowe, William W., 'From Semiotics to Hermeneutics: Modes of Detection in Doyle and Chandler', in *The Poetics of Murder: Detective Fiction and Literary Theory*, ed. by Glenn W. Most and William W. Stowe (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), 366-83
Stratton, Jon, *Writing Sites: A Genealogy of the Postmodern World* (New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990)
Sturrock, John, *Paper Tigers: The Ideal Fictions of Jorge Luis Borges* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977)
Suits, Bernard, 'What Is a Game?', *Philosophy of Science*, 34 (1967), 148-156
Suits, Bernard, *The Grasshopper: Games, Life and Utopia* (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 1978)

Suits, Bernard, 'The Detective Story: A Case Study of Games in Literature', *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, 12 (1985), 200-19

Suleiman, Susan Rubin, 'Naming and Difference: Reflections on 'Modernism *versus* Postmodernism' in Literature', in *Approaching Postmodernism*, ed. by Douwe W. Fokkema and Hans Bertens (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1986), 255-70

Sussman, Henry, *Afterimages of Modernity: Structure and Indifference in Twentieth-Century Literature* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990)

Sussman, Henry, 'The Writing of the System: Borges's Library and Calvino's Traffic', in *Literary Philosophers: Borges, Calvino, Eco*, ed. by Jorge J. E. Gracia, Carolyn Korsmeyer, and Rodolphe Gasché (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), 149-64

Swiggers, P., 'Methodological Innovation in the Comparative Study of Literature', *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, 9 (1982), 19-26

Tacca, Oscar, '¿Quién es Pierre Ménard?', *Boletín de la Academia Argentina de Letras*, 241-242 (1996), 301-25

Tafuri, Manfredo, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth: Avant-Gardes and Architecture from Piranesi to the 1970s*, trans. by Pellegrino d'Acierno and Robert Conolly (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London: MIT Press, 1987)

Taylor, Charles, *Human Agency and Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985)

Tealdi, Juan Carlos, *Borges y Viñas: literatura e ideologia* (Madrid: Origenes, 1983)

Tester, Keith, ed., *The Flâneur* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994)

Thom, René, 'Stop Chance! Silence Noise!', trans. by Robert E. Chumbley, *SubStance*, 40 (1983), 11-21

Thomson, Ian, 'In the Heat of the Moment: A Conversation in Rome with Italo Calvino', *London Magazine*, new series, 24: 9-10 (1984-1985), 54-68

Thorlby, Anthony, 'Comparative Literature', *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature*, 75-81

Timms, Edward, 'Introduction: Unreal City – Theme and Variations', in *Unreal City: Urban Experience in Modern European Literature and Art*, ed. by Edward Timms and David Kelley (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), 1-12

Todorov, Tzvetan, 'The Typology of Detective Fiction', in his *The Poetics of Prose*, trans. Richard Howard (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977), 42-52

Todorov, Tzvetan, 'On Literary Genesis', trans. by Ellen Burt, *Yale French Studies*, 58 (1979), 213-35

Toriano, Carmen, and Víctor G. Zonana, 'De los destinos cruzados: *Borges, Si una noche y El castillo*', in *Borges, Calvino, la literatura*, ed. by Alain Sicard and Fernando Moreno, 2 vols (Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos, 1996), ii, 281-98

Toulmin, Stephen, 'The Construal of Reality: Criticism in Modern and Postmodern Science', in *The Politics of Interpretation*, ed. by W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), 99-117

Toulmin, Stephen, *The Return to Cosmology: Postmodern Science and the Theology of Nature* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1982)

Trigg, Roger, *Reality at Risk: A Defence of Realism in Philosophy and the Sciences* (Sussex: Harvester, 1980)

Trotter, David, 'Theory and Detective Fiction', *Critical Quarterly*, 33 (1991), 66-77

Updike, John, 'The Author as Librarian', in *Critical Essays on Jorge Luis Borges*, ed. by Jaime Alazraki (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1987), 62-77

Updike, John, 'Les métropoles de l'esprit', trans. by Jean-Baptiste Para, *Europe*, 75 (1997), 59-64

Urresti, Marcelo, 'Borges y la tensión del simulacro', in *Borges y la filosofía*, ed. by Gregorio Kaminsky (Buenos Aires: Instituto de Filosofía, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Universidad de Buenos Aires, 1994), 79-93

Usher, Jonathan, 'Interruptory Mechanisms in Calvino's *Se une notte ...*', *Italian Studies*, 45 (1990), 81-102

Usher, Jonathan, 'From 'Super-Albero' to 'Iper-Romanzo': Lexical Continuity and Constraint in Calvino's *Se una notte d'inverno*', *Italian Studies*, 51 (1996), 181-203

Vaccaro, Alejandro, 'Borges, un argentino en la historia', *Todo es Historia*, August 1999, 8-21

Valdés, Mario J., and Owen Miller, eds, *Identity of the Literary Text* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985)

Valdés, Mario J., *Phenomenological Hermeneutics and the Study of Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987)

Van Leer, David, 'Detecting Truth: The World of the Dupin Tales', in *New Essays on Poe's Major Tales*, ed. by Kenneth Silverman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 65-91

Varese, Claudio, 'Italo Calvino: Una complessa continuità', *Rassegna della letteratura italiana*, 84 (1980), 252-56

Vargas Llosa, Mario, 'The Fictions of Borges', in *In Memory of Borges*, ed. by Norman Thomas di Giovanni (London: Constable, 1988), 105-19

Vargas Llosa, Mario, *A Writer's Reality* (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1991)

Varsava, Jerry, 'Calvino's Combinative Aesthetics: Theory and Practice', *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 6 (1986), 11-18

Varsava, Jerry, 'The Last Fictions: Calvino's Borgesian Odysseys', in *Borges and his Successors: The Borgesian Impact on Literature and the Arts*, ed. by Edna Aizenberg (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1990), 183-99

Vázquez, María Esther, ''La memoría de Shakespeare': el último juego de Borges', *Revista Iberoamericana*, 151 (1990), 479-87

Volek, Emil, 'Aquiles y la tortuga: arte, imaginación y la realidad según Borges', *Revista Iberoamericana*, 100-101 (1977), 293-310

Wadleigh Chandler, Frank, 'The Comparative Study of Literature', *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature*, 15 (1966), 50-62

Watson, David S., 'Calvino and the Problem of Textual Referentiality', *The Italianist*, 8 (1988), 66-78

Waugh, Patricia, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1984)

Waugh, Patricia, *Practising Postmodernism Reading Modernism* (London: Arnold, 1992)

Weaver, William, 'Calvino: An Interview and its Story', in *Calvino Revisited*, ed. by Franco Ricci (Ottawa: Dovehouse, 1989), 17-31

Weber, Frances Wyers, 'Borges's Stories: Fiction and Philosophy', *Hispanic Review*, 2 (1968), 124-41

Weber, Stephen S., 'Lover of Labyrinths', in *Simply a Man of Letters*, ed. by Carlos Cortinez (Orono, Maine: University of Maine at Orono Press, 1982), 199-209

Weiner, Norbert, *Cybernetics: Control and Communication in the Animal and in the Machine* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1948)

Weinsheimer, Joel, *Philosophical Hermeneutics and Literary Theory* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991)

Weiss, Beno, *Understanding Italo Calvino* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1993)

Weissert, Thomas P., 'Representation and Bifurcation: Borges's Garden of Chaos Dynamics', in *Chaos and Order: Complex Dynamics in Literature and Science*,

ed. by N. Katherine Hayles (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 223-43

Weisstein, Ulrich, *Comparative Literature and Literary Theory: Survey and Introduction*, trans. by William Riggan (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1973; first publ. 1968)

Wellek, René, 'The Concept of Comparative Literature', *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature*, 2 (1953), 1-5

Wellek, René, 'The Crisis of Comparative Literature', in his *Concepts of Criticism*, ed. by Stephen G. Nichols, Jr. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1963), 282-95

Wellek, René, 'The Name and Nature of Comparative Literature', in *Comparatists at Work: Studies in Comparative Literature*, ed. by Stephen G. Nichols, Jr., and Richard B. Vowles (Waltham, Massachusetts: Blaisdell, 1968), 3-27

Wellek, René, and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature*, 3rd edn (London: Penguin, 1973; first publ. 1949)

West, Philip, 'The Redundant Labyrinth', *Salmagundi*, 46 (1979), 58-83

Wheelock, Carter, *The Mythmaker: A Study of Motif and Symbol in the Short Stories of Jorge Luis Borges* (Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1969)

White, Hayden, 'Michel Foucault', in *Structuralism and Since: From Lévi Strauss to Derrida*, ed. by John Sturrock (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 81-115

White, Hayden, 'The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality', in *On Narrative*, ed. by W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 1-23

Whitehead, Alfred North, *Science and the Modern World* (London: Free Association Books, 1985; first publ. 1926)

Wilde, Alan, *Horizons of Assent: Modernism, Postmodernism, and the Ironic Imagination* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981)

Wilde, Alan, ''Strange Displacements of the Ordinary': Apple, Elkin, Barthelme, and the Problem of the Excluded Middle', *Boundary 2*, 10 (1982), 177-201

Will, Frederic, 'Comparative Literature and the Challenge of Modern Criticism', *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature*, 9 (1960), 29-31

Williams, Garnett P., *Chaos Theory Tamed* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1997)

Williams, Raymond, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, rev edn (London: Fontana, 1988; first publ. 1976)

Williams, Raymond, 'The Metropolis and the Emergence of Modernism', in *Unreal City: Urban Experience in Modern European Literature and Art*, ed. by Edward Timms and David Kelley (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), 13-24

Williamson, Edwin, *The Penguin History of Latin America* (London: Penguin, 1992)

Wilson, Edward O., *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge* (London: Abacus, 1999)

Wilson, Robert Rawdon, 'Three Prolusions: Toward a Game Model in Literary Theory', *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, 8 (1981), 79-92

Wilson, Robert Rawdon, *In Palamedes' Shadow: Explorations in Play, Game, and Narrative Theory* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1990)

Wilson, Robert Rawdon, 'The Metamorphoses of Fictional Space: Magical Realism', in *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, ed. by Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995), 209-33

Winterson, Jeanette, 'Invisible Author', *The Times (T2)*, 18 December 2002, 16

Wolf, Alan, 'Simplicity and Universality in the Transition to Chaos', *Nature*, 305 (1983), 182-83

Wolfe Levy, Diane, 'City Signs: Toward a Definition of Urban Literature', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 24 (1978), 65-73

Wood, Michael, *Children of Silence: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* (London: Pimlico, 1998)

Wood, Michael, 'In Reality', *Janus Head*, 5.2 (2003), 9-14

Woodall, James, *The Man in the Mirror of the Book: A Life of Jorge Luis Borges* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1996)

Woodhouse, John Robert, *Italo Calvino: A Reappraisal and an Appreciation of the Trilogy* (Hull: University of Hull, 1968)

Woodhouse, John Robert, 'Fantasy, Alienation and the *Racconti* of Italo Calvino', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 6 (1970), 399-412

Woodhouse, John Rober, 'From Italo Calvino to Tonio Cavilla: The First Twenty Years', in *Calvino Revisited*, ed. by Franco Ricci (Ottawa: Dovehouse, 1989), 33-50

Woods, Tim, *Beginning Postmodernisms* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999)

Worringer, Wilhelm, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, trans. by Michael Bullock (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1948; first publ. 1908)

Woscoboinik, Julio, *El secreto de Borges: indagación psicoanalítica de su obra* (Buenos Aires: Trieb, 1988)

Yates, Donald A., 'Behind 'Borges and I'', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 3 (1973), 317-24

Yates, Donald A., *Jorge Luis Borges: Life, Work, and Criticism* (Fredericton, NB: York Press, 1985)

Young, Richard A., 'Borges y Calvino a partir de Baudrillard', in *Borges, Calvino, la literatura*, ed. by Alain Sicard and Fernando Moreno, 2 vols (Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos, 1996), i, 105-17

Yourcenar, Marguerite, 'The Dark Brain of Piranesi', in *The Dark Brain of Piranesi and Other Essays*, trans. by Richard Howard and Marguerite Yourcenar (Henley-on-Thames: Aidan Ellis, 1985), 88-128

Yurkievich, Saúl, 'Borges/Cortazár: mundos y modos de la ficción fantástica', *Revista Iberoamericana*, 110-111 (1980), 153-60

Yurkievich, Saúl, 'El cristal y la llama', in *Borges, Calvino, la literatura*, ed. by Alain Sicard and Fernando Moreno, 2 vols (Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos, 1996), i, 27-40

Zamora, Lois Parkinson, 'Borges's Monsters: Unnatural Wholes and the Transformation of Genre', in *Literary Philosophers: Borges, Calvino, Eco*, ed. by Jorge J. E. Gracia, Carolyn Korsmeyer, and Rodolphe Gasché (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), 47-84

Zamora, Lois Parkinson, 'The Visualising Capacity of Magical Realism: Objects and Expression in the Work of Jorge Luis Borges', *Janus Head*, 5.2 (2003), 21-37